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# LECTURES

ON THE

## *NATURE AND END*

OF THE

# SACRED OFFICE,

AND ON THE

## DIGNITY, DUTY, QUALIFICATIONS, AND CHARACTER,

OF THE

# SACRED ORDER.

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BALTIMORE,

PUBLISHED BY A. NEAL, BOOK-SELLER, WATER-STREET.

Magill and Clime, Printers.

1810.

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# PREFACE.

About fifteen years ago, the writer of the following sheets having been appointed to preach before the Annual Meeting of the Synod of Argyll, was led, by this circumstance, to cast his eye on such books as fell in his way, relative to the Nature and End of the Sacred Office. He was disappointed in not finding that any treated of the subject fully and in a distinct and regular manner. He thought it might be of use to the cause of religion in general, and especially to young divines, to have the nature, extent, and importance of those duties which the ministers of religion are called to discharge, and of that character which they are called to bear, delineated and exhibited in one connected view. With this impression upon his mind, he laid down his plan, and filled it up with the most important thoughts which occurred to him upon the different parts of it, supported occasionally by the sentiments of others on the same subject.

But the greatest difficulty still remained. The scriptures, from which he wished to take

his view of the Nature of the Sacred Office, seemed to him to point out a higher walk than what is sometimes pursued; and, while he wished to point to the same path, he was afraid that what was really a labour of love, might be considered by some as a censure. In order to get over this difficulty, and to avoid the imputation of assuming more than belonged to him, he wished to publish these discourses under the veil of a feigned name, as the supposed lectures of a teacher of former times;* to whose age and manner of thinking and acting, some things contained in them might appear more suitable than to the fashion of the present times. But some of his friends, for whose judgment he has the utmost deference, urged him to strip them of this little machinery, and to speak in his own name. The times determined him to comply, and to bear any animadversion, if such awaited him, for having discharged what he considered as his duty, and the duty of all who are engaged in the same cause ; which is, *to provoke one another to love and to good works.*

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* Of St. Columba, the venerable Abbot of Iona, and the Apostle and Patron Saint of the Ancient Scots, an account of whose life was intended to be prefixed to them, but which is now published apart.

The times are awful, almost beyond example. A justly offended God threatens to deprive us, as he did our neighbours, of that holy religion, of which too many have little more than the name and mere profession; and all our national efforts are vain, if his favour is not first obtained. Our only safety lies in effecting a reconciliation with him, by repentance and reformation of manners. And, in this work, the ministers of religion should take the lead, and stir up all the spirit that is in them. "Nunc "omnes vocat ultimus labor." The axe is laid to the root of the tree, and we may fear it shall be cut down, if it bear not more and better fruit. We, it is to be feared, as well as the people, if weighed in the balance, will be found wanting. What though our morals should be allowed to be correct, and our doctrines to be pure, may we not still be wanting in what is no less absolutely necessary, especially at present, strenuous exertion and ardent zeal? Have not we, conforming ourselves too much to the fashion of the times, *fallen from our first love*, as well as the people? And does not the voice of Providence sound in our ears, as well as in theirs, *Repent, and do the first works, or else I will come quickly?*

True religion is at a low ebb; and both open enemies and secret foes attempt to destroy the

little of it that remains. But, if we exert ourselves, it is impossible to say what we may yet effect. The best, and the greatest number too, I trust, are yet disposed to show favour to religion, and capable of being roused to support it, if we raise our voice aloud, and awake them. Zeal and exertion may yet save us. By zeal and exertion, a very small number once converted the whole nation to christianity; and, by the like means, through the blessing of God, we may yet effect a task much less arduous than theirs. The laws of our country support us; and the rich and great, if they know even their worldly interest, will encourage our zeal, and co-operate with our exertion; for they may now see, that, on the existence of religion, their existence too depends. The poor will applaud our zeal, and listen with pleasure to our more animated strain of preaching: For, what have they remaining, if fashionable philosophy and novel doctrines should succeed in taking away from them the consolations of religion?

Although the following sheets relate chiefly to the Sacred Order, it is hoped they may be perused by others also with advantage. All christians, in all stations, should consider themselves as persons who expect soon to be *priests*

*and kings with God;* and should be concerned to promote his glory, and their own salvation, by giving every aid in their power, to the revival of a spirit of piety, devotion and religion. In such a period as the present, they should rouse themselves up from that torpid indifference to religion, which has unhappily pervaded all ranks of people, and endeavour to rekindle the decaying flame, lest either the lamp should of itself go out, or lest God should, in judgment, *remove the candlestick out of it's place.* How dark and full of horror would be the night that should then ensue! Should the sun be torn from the firmament, the world would not be in so dismal a state, as that in which it should be left, if the light of christianity should be extinguished, and only the dim taper of reason substituted in it's place. This taper which owes all it's boasted light to borrowed beams, would be of little avail, if the sun should set. The human mind would soon be debased by the grossest superstition, and the most polished nations would sink again into barbarism, ignorance, and idolatry. Such is the tendency of the spirit which is at present working, and of those principles which are at present spreading. The danger of their prevalence is great and urgent, and every lover of

mankind should do all in his power to oppose them. This is a duty which admits of no delay, and calls for every exertion. If the following pages shall in the smallest degree, contribute to rouse pastor or people to a higher sense of ther duty and their danger, and to a greater regard for religion, the author has his wish. In any event, he has the present satisfaction, and expects the future reward, of having intended well.

May God endow all Christians with the spirit of their calling, and with a warmer zeal for christianity! May he endow all Ministers of the Gospel with the spirit of their office! And, as he has ordained them to be the light of the world, may their light so shine before men, that they, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven!

# LECTURES

ON THE

# SACRED OFFICE

# OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

## LECTURE I.

*Introduction.....Of the Nature and End of the Sacred Office, and the Qualifications necessary for the Discharge of it.*

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

WHEN we put others in mind of their duty so often, it cannot surely be improper to be sometimes admonished of our own...." It is readily allowed (may " some one say) ; but what right have you to assume " the office ?".....I claim no peculiar right to it, my dear brother ; nor do I set about it from any vain persuasion of being possessed of any sanctity or talents superior to yours. No ; to speak in a becoming manner of the most august office under heaven, and to address the most venerable of the sons of men, would, I well know, require gifts and graces which heaven has not yet been pleased to bestow on me. And if any other had stood forth to discharge a duty, which all must allow to be proper, and which some will deem to be necessary, or at least to be seasonable, I should have gladly sat down at his feet and listened. For I am sensible that I need the counsel

which I give, much more, perhaps, than the greater part of those who may receive it; and, therefore, a sense of it's being a duty incumbent upon all of us, to *admonish one another*, and to *provoke unto love and to good works*, is that alone which prompts me to undertake this labour of love at present.† In the prosecution of it, I am aware I must, like many other preachers, endure a degree of self-reproach, for falling short of that holiness, or moral excellence, which I reckon my duty to recommend. But this pain I shall willingly endure, if I may be able to persuade others, or myself, to a greater degree of diligence in our calling than we have hitherto attained. And, as I would utter nothing inconsistent with that respect and regard which I feel for my brethren, so I hope to be forgiven if I speak my sentiments also with that undisguised freedom which may be justly expected from the character which we all bear; for we are all *ambassadors for Christ*.

Ambassadors for Christ! how august the title! how high the character! What may not God and men expect from those who are called to the honour of bearing it! The idea suggests at once every thing that is venerable, every thing that is holy. It directs us to look for qualifications of the highest order; for a conduct of the purest kind. For, if stations of honour and trust among men require persons of knowledge, fidelity, zeal, and the like accomplishments, to fill them, much more does our office require that we should be possessed of qualifications corresponding, in some measure, to the high and holy vocation wherewith we are called.

† Nec prerogativa mihimet scientiæ, si hæc meis consacerdotibus charitatis intuitu prærogem, vindicabo, aut vitæ perfectæ me esse fateor, cum de vita perfecta alios moneo; sed potius cum hæc ad illos loqui audeo, simul cum illis puæ loquor audiam. *D. Ambros. de Dign. Sacerd.*

By taking a particular view of this calling, and of these qualifications, we shall be able to discover, not only what we are, but likewise what we ought to be. Let us therefore enter upon this survey with impartiality and candour: Let us have an eye to our own heart and conduct as we go along, that we may see in what things we are deficient, and that we may rouse up our faculties to acquire, or to excel in every accomplishment that should be found in the sacred character of the ministers of Jesus.

*Of the Nature and End of the Sacred Office*, much needs not here be said. It has been the general practice of all nations to have a distinct order of men set apart and consecrated, in order to officiate and preside in holy things, and to instruct men in moral and religious duties. This is more especially the case under the gospel dispensation. In the gospel we are told that *the whole world lieth in wickedness;* that Christ came to *call it to repentance and salvation;* and that to his apostles, and their followers, *he hath committed the ministry of reconciliation. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* The great end, therefore, of the Christian ministry, is, after the example of Christ, to teach and persuade men to be holy and happy. So it clearly appears to be, from our Saviour's commission to the apostle of the Gentiles; *I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me.*† The end of every other office is the attainment of some temporal good; this alone proposes eternal felicity. The importance of every other office, therefore, falls as far short of this, as three-score and ten years fall short of eternity.

† Acts xxxvi. 17, 18.

With regard to the qualifications requisite for this office, and the proper manner of discharging it, the precepts and example of Christ, and of his apostles, are the best, and indeed the only rule to direct us. Now these precepts enjoin us, and these examples teach us, to be watchful and *wise*, or *prudent* and circumspect, in all our conduct. They require of us to have light and *knowledge* ourselves, that we may be qualified to teach others, and not be as the blind leading the blind, lest we should both fall into the ditch. They require of us to have our own minds entirely filled with *piety*, that we may be as salt to preserve the rest of the world from corruption. They require of us to be given to *prayer*, as the best means of preserving ourselves from the danger of temptation, and of obtaining the favour of God, both to ourselves and others. They bid us set our affections on the things that are above, and show a *heavenly-mindedness* becoming our hopes and high profession. They require of us to be holy in our *conversation*, *exemplary* in our life, and *meek and lowly* in our mind. They require of us the warmest *zeal* for the glory of God, the most intense *love* to the souls of men, and the strongest *sensibility* and sympathy for their temporal and spiritual necessities. They require of us to *declare the whole counsel of God* with *fidelity*, *plainness*, force and gracefulness; *speaking* from the abundance of the heart, and *solicitous* about the success of our labours. They require of us to be attentive to the *daily duties* of our office, teaching in season and out of season, and from house to house, exhorting, reproving, comforting, and maintaining *discipline and order*, according to the various exigencies of each one of that flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers. Moreover, they require of us to be *mortified* and *self-denied*, and not to conform ourselves to the world, either in its sinful pursuits or vain amusements, but to the example of our Lord,

and to the precepts of his gospel; and charge us to suffer none who will not do all this to have lot or part in the holy office.

Such, my brethren, are our Master's and his apostles' precepts, in regard to the qualifications requisite for the sacred office, and the proper manner of discharging it: and we shall have frequent occasion to see, in the sequel, that in their own lives they were all exemplified. The office is still the same, and the same qualifications are required of all who come forward to serve in it. The sum of these is, to be as holy as possible ourselves, and as diligent and zealous as possible, to make others also holy.

To have always this clear and fixed view of the end of our office, would be of great moment towards enabling us to discharge aright all its duties. It would direct us what to say, and how to say it, so as may best answer the purpose. It would furnish us with a just standard for estimating every thought, and teach us what to receive, and what to reject, when we compose our sermons. This, if duly attended to, would lead us to the most useful and interesting subjects, to the most cogent and convincing arguments, to the most earnest and affecting manner, and to the most powerful and persuasive language. It would entirely banish from our pulpits those cold and unimportant disquisitions by which we make a show of learning, and those glittering and rhetorical harangues by which we make a parade of speech. It would make us anxious to edify and to persuade, rather than to please or amuse, and to recommend our cause, and not ourselves, to those to whom we preach. Yes; for he whose only aim is to save souls, is in no danger of falling into those fatal, but common errors. To please or get applause, is never the object with him, but to convince, to persuade, to profit. Wholly devoted to his heavenly office, he

cares for nothing but what tends to make himself and others better and wiser.

Be this, therefore, the star by which we shall ever direct our course, and let us keep our eye continually fixed upon it; if we wish to save our own souls and those that hear us. This premised, we go on to consider, in a more particular manner, the qualifications necessary for those who would discharge the sacred office aright, and be not only in name, but in deed, the ministers of the gospel of Jesus.

## LECTURE II.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should be a man of Prudence.*

WITH a just and fixed view of the end of our office must ever be connected that prudence and good sense which is so necessary to conduct us through it. This is, I may say, the first requisite in a minister of the gospel. On this foundation must all the other parts of the sacred character be built, otherwise the superstructure will never stand. Without prudence, indeed, few or none of them have any value. Without prudence, learning and eloquence are so far from being useful, that they too often do harm. Without prudence, zeal may degenerate into fury, and piety itself into fanaticism or mental delusion. In a word, without the spirit of wisdom and a sound mind, a minister, whatever may be his other gifts and graces, will be more likely to prejudice the cause of the gospel, than to do it real or essential service.

It is with reason, therefore, that we are required to be *watchful* and circumspect in *all things*, to take *heed to ourselves*, and to be *wise as serpents*, as well as to be innocent as doves.† The vast importance of our office indispensibly requires us to be so. Yes, my brethren, when we sail a stormy and tempestuous sea, in a vessel which bears so precious a cargo (if I may so speak) as the souls of immortal beings, and when we have taken upon us to pilot this vessel to the port, and to steer her through the rocks and shallows in which we are in so much danger of making shipwreck; heavens! what skill and prudence must be necessary for a post of such hazard

† 2 Tim. iv. 5. Luke xv. 3.

and trust, in order to make a happy voyage, and save our own souls and those of others!

Take any other view which you please of our office, and you will find that it always calls for the most consummate prudence. Yes, my brethren, when we fight with principalities and powers, for the great prize of immortality, and take upon us to lead a band of souls, in this holy warfare, to warn them of the assaults and stratagems of a powerful, artful, and invisible enemy, and of the no less formidable danger to which their own vicious inclinations and passions expose them; and when we, moreover, urge them to the necessary discipline and duty of their warfare, is not the highest prudence, even *the wisdom that is from above*, indispensibly necessary, to make us acquit ourselves properly in so very important a station?

Add to this, that the tempers, humours, and circumstances of men, are so various; and the methods to be used for gaining them so different; the regard to time, place, and character, so much to be observed; and a nice discernment in all these matters so absolutely necessary, that a minister, of all the men in the world, has most need of perfect prudence, in order to conduct himself with propriety on every occasion, both in his private and public capacity.

In his private capacity (if we may use the phrase in speaking of a minister), the prudence of an angel would hardly guard him from censure. If he is studious, retired, and reserved, some will call him morose, unsocial, and distant; if he is cheerful, fond of society, and ready to mix with the world, others will charge him with levity and profaneness; if a calm and cool temper be a predominant feature in his character, he will be suspected of lukewarmness and indifference; and if he be warm, earnest, and animated, he will, by some, be called a bigot and enthusiast. Some will blame him if his sanctity is not

more than human, while others quarrel with him only for being over-righteous. Thus, the Jews censured alike the austerity of the Baptist, and the familiarity of the Saviour.* For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, he hath a devil. The son of man came eating and drinking; that is, partaking of the innocent enjoyments of society, and they said, Behold, a man gluttonous and a wine biber, a friend of publicans and sinners. So crooked and perverse a generation (and the race will never be extinct) are fitly compared to froward children in the market-place, who would not be pleased with either the merry or mournful songs of their associates. A minister, therefore, in order to give as little offence as possible, must utter every word of his conversation with caution, and order every step of his life with circumspection. Wherever he goes, he must take prudence hand in hand with him: And prudence, wherever she is guide, if not to man, at least to God, will always justify her children.

In his public teaching, in like manner, it is prudence that must direct a minister in the choice of proper subjects, and in treating those subjects in a manner suited to the exigencies and capacity of his audience. It is prudence that must preserve him in his public, as well as in his private walk, from doing or saying any thing that might give cause of offence, or that might be construed into such; *that the ministry may not be blamed.*

But it is not only in his private life, and public teaching, that a minister has need of prudence. In every part of his intercourse with his people, he stands equally in need of it; particularly in maintaining discipline and order. His office calls on him to watch over every member of his flock, to preserve or recover them from sin and error, to instruct the

* Matth. xi. 18, 19.

ignorant, excite the negligent, confirm the weak, comfort the afflicted, satisfy the doubting, encourage the desponding, admonish and rebuke the disorderly. It calls on him to accommodate himself to every case, and to every capacity; that, if possible, he may direct and lead each and all under his care in the paths of everlasting salvation. And what virtue is there for which he has so much occasion in doing all this, as prudence? In a word, it is prudence, or good sense, that must for ever direct him to the best means of arriving at the great end of his office, the saving of the souls committed to his care.

Hence, in those emblematical representations which we have of ministers in the word of God,† we find that this makes always a principal part. With the face of the lion, of the eagle, and of the ox, in those symbolical figures, the face of a man is always conjoined. If the face of a lion denotes that we should have boldness and courage; if that of the ox denotes that we should have patience and fitness for labour; and if the eagle, which has a piercing eye, soars aloft and is swift in motion, denotes that we should be clear sighted in the truths of the gospel, that we should have sublime sentiments of devotion, and be heavenly-minded, as well as zealous and active in duty; so the face of a man denotes, that we should be eminently endowed with prudence and sagacity. And to show still more how necessary this virtue is in every part of our conduct, and in every department of our office, all the figures which constitute the emblem are represented as being *full of eyes;* to teach us that prudence must direct every step of our life, pervade every part of our office, and mix with every other ingredient in our character. Indeed, with all the other qualifications in the world, a minister with-

†Ezek. i. 10. Rev. iv. 7, 8, &c.

our prudence should have nothing to do with the holy office.

Accordingly, all religions, false as well as true, have required their sacred office to be filled with the wisest and best of human beings. "The first man," says the Vedam, or sacred book of the Bramins, "after his creation, said to God, 'There will be on "earth a variety of occupations, and every man will "not be fit for all; how then are men to be distinguished?' God answered him saying, 'They who "are endowed with the best intellects, and who discover the greatest prudence and propensity to virtue, "are always to be *Bramins*, or ministers of religion; "let the rest be what they will.

And justly might it be so ordained; for if (according to the dread observation of Plato†) the care of our flocks and herds is always committed to beings of a superior species, and not to a sheep, a goat, or a bull, the care of men (and more especially of the souls of men) requires, and deserves, not only the highest measure of prudence that falls to the share of mortals, but almost the wisdom of the gods or genii. The man, therefore, who aspires to this exalted calling, should aspire to the perfection of celestial natures, purify his soul from every thing gross and earthly, subdue his appetites, regulate his passions, inform his understanding, and, in all his demeanour, show a wisdom and prudence almost more than human. On the solid basis of prudence must every other ministerial qualification be built, if we wish to give beauty, strength, and permanency to the edifice. Of other natural talents, I shall only say, that they are not to be dispensed with; while I mention prudence as the most essential. Indeed, where prudence is, the rest are seldom wanting.‡

† De Legib. I. iv. Vid. Julian. Ep. ad Themist.

‡ Nullum numen abest, si sit prudentia. Juv.

## LECTURE III.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should be a man of Knowledge.*

THE first preachers of the gospel were divinely inspired, and therefore under no necessity of acquiring knowledge by diligent application to study. But ever since christianity has been fully established, the case has been otherwise ; for God seldom or never works by miracle when ordinary means will serve. Now, therefore, an early, close, and persevering application to study, must stand instead of inspiration, and qualify men to become servants of God in the holy ministry.

Accordingly, every well-ordered church, aware of the necessity of light and knowledge in those who are to dispense them to others, has always taken care to regulate the studies, and to examine into the learning of her probationers. I take it for granted, therefore, my brethren, that you have gone through a regular course of all those studies which the church has wisely prescribed to her candidates, and that your minds have been furnished with at least a competent knowledge of all the branches of literature. I trust that, besides being thorough masters of the language in which you are to exercise your ministry, you are not unacquainted with the learned languages ; especially those in which the scriptures were originally written ; and also with the most useful of the modern tongues. These open the measures of learning, and allow us to gather what we choose from every age and from every clime. I trust you have studied the politer parts of literature, and formed your taste on the best models of fine writing, and according to the

justest rules of criticism. These will enable you to discern and to relish the true beauties of writing; and, what is of more consequence, enable you to adorn your own discourses, and to give every sentiment the dress which best becomes it.

I presume you have also learned the science of reasoning justly, in order to assist your own faculties in the search of truth, and to enable you to propose it to others with force and clearness. You have also studied, I hope, the great volume which nature opens to your view, and which is so well calculated to inspire us with the most awful and sublime ideas of it's author. It is necessary too, my brethren, that we study attentively human nature, in all it's powers, passions, and affections, for which we should carefully consult our own breasts, observe men and manners, and get as thorough an acquaintance as we can with history. The history of different nations and of different ages, with their various characters, customs and manners, may teach us many important lessons for the direction of our own conduct, and furnish us with rich materials for the direction and improvement of others. The history of the church particularly, in all it's stages, and of those nations more immediately connected with it, will be of the utmost importance for understanding the scriptures, in which there are so many allusions to the customs and manners of ancient times.

We must especially study that science which teaches the importance of our moral principles, and shows us what is right and what is wrong; what leads to the truest enjoyment of life, and secures from it's greatest evils. This will enable us to strip vice of all it's gay and gaudy colours, to expose it's ugly form and dire effects, and, at the same time, to show the amiableness and advantage of virtue. This science, important to all, is peculiarly so to us; for it is the handmaid of divinity.

In sum, the knowledge of all these branches of education, with whatever else may be necessary to constitute the character of a man of letters, we ought to be possessed of to a considerable extent. They are the avenue which leads to the sanctuary, and no person ought to go in, or be permitted to go in, by any other path.

But these acquisitions, my brethren, though useful and necessary, will bring you only to the outer court of the temple. A thorough acquaintance with the sacred scriptures alone can entitle you to tread the sacred ground within. It is only by the constant and careful study of these, that your minds can be properly furnished for the work of the ministry: that you can hope to be approved by God, or serviceable to the souls of men. On these it becomes you therefore to *meditate and give yourselves up to them wholly*, as the great mean of *making the man of God perfect*, and thoroughly furnished for his work.

*Give attendance to reading*, was the advice of St. Paul to Timothy; and *we* have need to take it to ourselves. For a steward who has occasion constantly to dispense his stock, must be no less constantly adding to his store. Without a miracle, which the indolent has no ground to expect, the *stock of knowledge*, when never replenished, must soon be exhausted. It is only by diligence on our part, that we may hope to see our endeavours blessed by God, and crowned with any share of success. It was after Peter had toiled all the night that Christ commanded his blessing, and gave the miraculous draught of fishes in the morning.

We have mentioned the necessity of an early application to study, if we would attain to eminence or usefulness in our calling. Indeed, without a strong passion for study in early life, there is little to be expected from riper years; for indolence in youth is sure to be succeeded by ignorance and contempt in

age. But we are never to satisfy ourselves with having studied in youth, or with that degree of knowledge which first procured us admittance to the ministry. Neither the previous preparation of a few years, nor the occasional subsequent fits of it, will by any means serve our purpose. The calls of duty, and a regard to character, require of us to advance in knowledge as well as in holiness, and never to remit our application to study. If we have set out with moderate attainments, as is generally the case, we shall, without this continued application, become soon despised and useless. And if we have set out with a greater stock, we must aim at a greater degree of improvement, in order to be of greater service to the church of God, and to the souls of men. We must neither waste our time in indolence, nor spend too much of it in any pursuit that is foreign to our calling. Indolence would soon benumb the powers of the mind, and other pursuits would endanger it's immersion in worldly trifles, both which would be equally criminal. Yet one or other of these is too often the fate of such as are not intent on their proper business, and who consider not the pursuit of what is foreign to it as their reproach, and not their praise.

The study of the scriptures, especially, and of whatever may be connected with them, as church-history, systems of divinity, controversies, commentaries, and sermons, is our proper business, and deserves our first regard. It is from these we are to derive evidences of our faith, which will enable us to answer those who ask an account of it; to confute the errors of Jews, Infidels, and such as depart from the faith; and, in a word, to gainsay all it's adversaries. It is true we are not to seek for occasions of disputing about either the evidences or doctrines of our religion; but as we are liable to be attacked on both, it must be a very unhappy case if we cannot

both defend and conquer. As the light subdues the darkness, so should our superior knowledge of the truth scatter every cloud of ignorance and error.

Yet the study of no controversy, however needful, should divert our chief attention from what is of still higher moment, the thorough knowledge of practical religion. For this is the foundation of being good ourselves, and of doing good to others. It is this knowledge that will effectually teach us, that the great business of this transitory life is to prepare for another; and this preparation consists in the love of God and man, and in the practice of holiness and virtue. It is this that will teach us, that the means of attaining to those dispositions are a deep conviction of their absolute and eternal necessity, a deep conviction of our guilt and wickedness, a diligent and fervent application to God (through faith in a crucified Christ) for pardon and for grace; a constant use of the ordinances by which these are to be conveyed, and a watchful care over our heart and life. This, this alone is that saving knowledge on which depend our own souls and those under our ministry; and we ought never to slacken our diligence in pursuit of it, but to consider every moment as lost, which is not devoted, either directly or indirectly, to the improvement of our own souls, or to the advantage of our people.

But is it necessary, my brethren, to urge a minister of the gospel to the pursuit of this knowledge; to study the scriptures in which this knowledge is to be had, and to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the word of God? Cannot a sense of our duty attract us? Cannot the pleasure of such a study allure us? Even the idolatrous priests of the heathen nations, whose religion was only a chaos of fables, devoted themselves entirely to the study of these; living retired in their temples, and secluded from the

world. Religion was their business, and therefore religion was their study;—religion was their pleasure. And shall we, my brethren, who are set apart for the study and service of a religion as far above theirs as heaven is above earth, shall we who are initiated into the mysteries of that glorious and comfortable religion, which our gracious Redeemer brought down from the bosom of the *God of love*; shall we, I say, find no delight in learning and studying the sublime and important truths which it contains? Where was there ever so full and just an account of human nature, and of our truest interests in this and in another world? Where was there ever so clear an evidence of the certainty, or so lively and rational a description of the nature of a life to come? Where can we meet with any truths of so wonderful a nature and vast moment, as the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord; the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and it's miraculous and sanctifying operations? Here we read of the nature and office of angels, the apostacy, misery, and stratagems of devils, the fall and recovery of man, the various revolutions of religion, and the different and final fate of mankind. Here we have the most perfect system of morals, with the most powerful arguments and aids to engage us to the practice of them; and all this exemplified to us in the perfect model of the life of the holy *Jesus*. And shall not all these wonderful matters, into which even *angels desire to look*, engage our hearts, occupy our time, and challenge our attention? Are we permitted to drink of that *pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb*, and shall our souls have no relish for such heavenly entertainment? Shall we not ardently desire to satiate our minds with those delicious draughts of which even angels wish to partake? Is it possible that any of us can be so de-

praved as to grudge the time which we must necessarily devote to the study of the word of God? Or is it possible that we can satisfy ourselves with a superficial knowledge of those doctrines, which it is our business to explain? How then can we instruct the souls committed to our care? How can the people be acquainted with those truths to which their teachers themselves are so much disposed to be strangers?

Let us, my brethren, look around us when we stand up in our churches, and for a moment reflect on our important situation. We are about to speak on matters of vast and eternal consequence, to a congregation of rational, accountable, and immortal creatures. The salvation or damnation of their souls as well as of our own, depends, in some measure, on the manner in which we are to act our part. Is it possible to conceive any situation more awful and interesting? One should think that the most inconsiderate would be so impressed with the thoughts of it, as to make every possible preparation before he would enter into that place; and acquit himself with all possible earnestness when actually engaged. He who speaks (as he who painted) for eternity,* ought to be at all possible pains to do it well.

Demosthenes would have that person branded as the pest of society, and the enemy of the commonwealth, who durst propose any thing in public which he had not first considered well, and pondered in private. But how much more presumptuous is it for a man, in the great business of salvation, to appear before the church, before angels, and before God himself, and to speak of the dread mysteries of redemption, without having secured before-hand every advantage which knowledge, study, and preparation

* "I paint for eternity," said Apelles, when asked why he took such pains upon his pictures.

could have possibly given them.‡ Not being master of his subject, is he not afraid of treating it in a loose and careless manner, so as to do justice neither to the subject, nor to souls, but rather nauseate the audience, damp their devotions, and vilify the holy ordinance of preaching?

Think, O my soul, on the situation of that multitude of immortal beings, all come to hear from thee (some of them perhaps for the last time) how they may be saved. Think of the high trust which God hath put in thy hands; but which he may not possibly allow thee to exercise beyond this one precious opportunity. Are, therefore, the doctrines which thou art about to deliver, suited to the exigencies of souls verging towards eternity? Are they suited to the capacities and circumstances of those who are to hear them? Have they a strong tendency to make them wiser and better, to enlighten and to reform, to sanctify and to save them? And can your conscience say that this tendency is so strong as thou couldst have possibly made it, if thy diligence had been greater? Have no pains been spared to make thyself master of thy subject, and to make it appear striking and important to thy hearers? Is thy own heart impressed with such a sense of thy doctrines, as to make thy concern visible to others, and so interest their hearts also in thy cause? If these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative, the conscience of the preacher must reproach him, the souls of his hearers must accuse him, and a righteous God on that day on which he will call him to give an

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‡ Cogitet ille quantæ molis est in illa prædicare societate, in cujus medio Dominus ille est, cui sol et luna famulantur, cui adsunt ministri ejus millia millium et decies centena millia! Quantæ molis est regnum Christi erigere, et Satanæ, palatia demoliri. *Nic. Heming. de Pastore.*

account of his stewardship, will assuredly condemn him.†

And just is the condemnation of that servant who proves unfaithful in such an office. For we, my brethren, like our master, are *set for the rise or fall of many in Israel ;* so that none of us, if indolent or evil, can perish singly. Our guilt must be above measure aggravated, as, in our ruin, that of thousands is involved. We are *the light of the world*, and if the beams which we shed be dim, how can the poor wanderer find his way ? If, as is sometimes the case, he may not read, or if he cannot understand, in the devious paths of error, the unhappy wretch must perish ; for there is no ray to direct his fainting eyes, there is no light in the lamp that should guide him. We are the eyes of the church, and if the eye be darkness, the whole body must be so too. We are the teachers of others, and should therefore be taught ourselves. Without this, the blind lead the blind, and both must fall into the pit.

It is true, all cannot have great talents, extraordinary gifts, and an uncommon genius. But all ought to know Jesus Christ, and to be intimately acquainted with his law and with his gospel. To attain to this and whatever else may be more immediately connected with our office, no study, no pains, no application should be spared ; nor should any moment be lost in supine sloth, unnecessary sleep, or vain recreations. If the merchant shall compass sea and land in pursuit of riches, and the philosopher in pursuit of science ; if the husbandman shall toil all day, and the mechanic apply to his work from morning to night, that by the fruit of their labour they may live, shall not we be equally diligent to find the pearl of great price, and to attain to the knowledge of him, whom to know is *life eternal ?* Shall we not be ashamed

† See Dr. Leechman's Syn. Serm.

that the men of the world should be late and early, and all the day long, at their respective callings, if we are not equally intent on some part or other of ours? Devoted and set apart, as we solemnly are, to the sacred work of the ministry, shall we not, with all our heart and soul, attend to it as our only care; since we cannot otherwise expect to save our own souls or those of others? Shall we not seek for knowledge as for hidden treasure, and be equally careful to dispense it? If not, how inexcusable must we appear at the great day of the Lord? for this knowledge is not hidden from us, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that we should say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that we should say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it? But it is very nigh unto us, it is in our hands, and should be in our mouths, and in our heart.—To make any proficiency in this knowledge, however, it is necessary that our study shall be accompanied with piety, and with prayer.‡

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‡ Baron Bielfeld (Elements of Universal Erudition, Vol. I,) has given the following analysis of the knowledge requisite for a minister, in regard to preparation, theory, and practice.

I. Preparation.

1. Languages.—His native tongue, in which he is to exercise his ministry, and in which he ought to be most perfect.

The Latin language, which is the language of the learned world in general.

The Greek language, in order to understand the New Testament.

The Hebrew language, with the Talmudic and Rabbinical idioms.

The Arabic language.

The Syriac language.

The French, for the excellent books written in it, as well as in English.

2. Natural philosophy.
   Logic.
   Metaphysics.
   Moral philosophy.
3. Rhetoric and eloquence, or the art of speaking and writing with correctness, elegance, and persuasion.
4. Universal history, with chronology and geography.
5. The study of the Jewish antiquities.

II. THEORY.

1. Systematic theology.
2. Exegetic, hermeneutic, and critical theology, or the art of understanding and explaining any passage or part of scripture, or whatever may relate to it.
3. Polemic theology.
4. Natural theology.
5. Moral theology.
6. History of the church, under the Old and New Testaments.

III. PRACTICE.

1. Pastoral theology, viz: homiletic, catechetic, and casuistic.
2. Consistorial theology, or the knowledge of the canon law, forms of church courts, &c. Ecclesiastical government and jurisprudence, civil laws respecting the church, &c.
3. The prudential exercise of the ministerial functions.

## LECTURE IV.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should be a man of Piety.*

PIETY, which consists in the habitual exercise of the devout affections towards God, is the same to the soul that the breath is to the body. It is, if not it's life, at least the symptom or sign of it. It is the foundation of that mysterious union, or communion, which it enjoys with the father of spirits, and which is altogether essential to the happiness of man, and to the character of a minister.

A minister without piety is a monster in the church of God. His ugliness deters those who would approach the holy place so much, that all the exhortations which he gives them to enter thither are to no purpose. He resembles those horrid shapes which the poets feign to have stood at the entrance of Elysium. It required uncommon resolution in any person to pass by them, and force his way into the abodes of the blessed.

Should a minister have even the appearance of piety, and the *form of Godliness*, without which he would be altogether shocking, yet if he has not also it's *power*, he will in vain attempt to make others what he himself is not. From shame and the indispensable calls of duty, indeed, he must do something; but it will be as seldom and as superficially as may be. Or, say he should put on the appearance of earnestness, yet will he be considered as only acting a part, which will appear equally unnatural and disgustful. His own heart will be apt to misgive him; his hearers, who know his real character, will despise him; and God, who knows more than his own heart or his hearers, will detest and condemn him.

In the sight of God and man, hypocrisy is as odious as profaneness.

Yes, my brethren, the foundation of every thing amiable in our character is true and unaffected piety. And this we should constantly cultivate by daily meditation, fervent prayer, diligence in working out our own salvation, and ardent zeal for the everlasting welfare of our people. This only will give weight to the truths which we utter; truths which will almost always affect our hearers, in proportion to the opinion which they entertain of our piety.

Let us then lay it down as a first principle, that, in order to teach successfully to others the power and life of godliness, we must feel it's vital influence upon our own souls. For, inspire them with a taste for heavenly things we cannot, if we have not a relish for those things ourselves. I will not say but God may sometimes, by way of miracle, bring a man to life *by the bones of a dead prophet*, and may sometimes honour his own word so far as to make it effectual for salvation, even when it falls from the unhallowed lips of a wicked minister. I know that when Noah arose from his wine and prophecied, the event corresponded with his prediction; and that the prescription of Elisha, though conveyed by Gehazi, cured the Syrian general. This, however, is not the ordinary way of God; it is rather *his strange work*; for it is extremely seldom that the labours of an ungodly minister are owned by him, or attended with any success. On the contrary, they bring discredit upon religion, and throw snares in the way of the souls of men. The deepest wounds which religion receives, are those which are given her in the house of her friends.—If Hophni and Phineas be priests, the sacrifice of the Lord will soon be abhorred, and his temples will soon be deserted.

Such is the baneful influence which the impiety of ministers has upon all around them. And if we consider the consequence with respect to those unhappy beings themselves, we are presented with a still more melancholy prospect. After having preached the gospel to others, they themselves must be cast away. To plead their having preached, and prophesied, and cast out devils in the name of Jesus, will be of no avail, while they want piety. In vain do they hope that God will dispense with the homage of the heart, and with the holiness of life which he requires in his servants, and either remit or mitigate their punishment, on account of their having preached to others a gospel to which they would not conform themselves. If the deceitfulness of the human heart could indeed flatter itself with the hope of any mitigation of punishment amid such aggravated guilt, one should think it would be only such as that of the wretch mentioned in one of the fables of Zoroaster, who was wholly immersed in the fiery lake, except one of his heels, which had the privilege of rising above the surface, on account of his having once turned upon it to relieve a lamb entangled in a thicket.—To the minister, whose lips only did their duty, who was a good preacher, but not a pious man, the application of the apologue is easy.—But apologues apart, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

I therefore repeat it, my brethren, we should not only have piety, but a very high degree of it. It is by no means enough that we should have as much of it as ordinary christians. God and men, with good reason, require more from us than from the rest of the world. Our time and talents are consecrated to religion, insomuch, that to apply them to any other purpose, not somehow subservient to this end, is sacrilege. We are, or at least ought to be, more disengaged from the business, cares, and incumbrances of this world, than other men are. We

are neither labourers nor tradesmen, we are neither merchants nor soldiers. We should therefore consider ourselves as holding an office somewhat akin to that of the holy angels, who are sent into the world as ministering spirits, for the general good of mankind. And having nothing else to mind but this sole, this glorious work, we should pursue it with the full bent and purpose of our soul, giving special heed that while we assist others to become heirs of salvation, we may be all heavenly and holy ourselves. For this end we cannot possibly use too much diligence, we cannot possibly aim too high: for that degree of piety which will qualify others for heaven will by no means serve for us.

*Coivin*, now with God and his angels,* had a vision to this purpose, on the day of his consecration to the ministry. Awful thoughts filled his soul. A heavenly light shone in his cell. He turned his eye to the heavens, and, lo, they were illumined; he looked to the earth, and, lo, it was on fire. The judgment-throne was set, and the inhabitants of heaven and earth assembled. Michael stood forth before the Judge, and held in his hand that mighty balance, in which souls and their actions are weighed.† When ordinary mortals were put in the scales, the standard by which they were tried was less and lighter; nor did they seem to be too scrupulously weighed, if the beam stood only near a poise. Nay, the breath of mercy made it sometimes incline in their favour, when all the pleas that made for them could not decidedly cast it. But when ministers came to be weighed, the standard was ten times aug-

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* "O Coivin, now with archangels!" So begins an address to him by St. Ciaran.

† See Pref. to White's Sermons. This image is sculptured in the Cathedral of Iona.

mented, for those of whom least was required; and, in general, that by which they were tried was the weight of the angel *Ithiel*, prince of the seventh or lowest order of the hierarchy of heaven. For God had ordained, that in the progressive scale there should be no blank, and that the highest order of men should reach the lowest order of superior beings. *Coivin* reflected on the dread office to which he was set apart; he perceived the awful sanctity and care which it required. His heart swelled; the tears burst from his eyes; he wiped them with his hand, and the vision vanished. The impression, however, remained, and Coivin lived on earth, innocent and active, as an angel of heaven.

Thus, my brethren, our salvation is much more difficult than that of any person under our charge; for to whomsoever much is given, of them the more will be required. Our daily duty calls on us to converse more with the scriptures, and to meditate more on the maxims of piety. The precepts which require, and the promises which encourage godliness, are better known by us than by others. Our temptations to irreligion are much fewer than those of other men, who are immersed in the affairs of the world, and exposed more frequently to the danger of falling into the company of sinners. Our particular calling as ministers, and our general calling as christians, lead us to pursue one and the same road; which is not often the case with other men. In a word, while one part of mankind is hurried about by the giddy whirlpool of fashion and pleasure, and the other toiling and slaving for the supply of real or imaginary wants; we, seated high on a place of safety, where, free from those temptations, we enjoy peace and competence, may attend to the great concerns of our calling, without any distraction or anxious care. Possessed, therefore, of these superior advantages, as well as of precious and peculiar promises, we ought

to feel more of the power of godliness, and to excel all the world in piety. Thus only shall we secure happiness to ourselves, and successfully recommend t to others.

How then are those pious dispositions, the source of so much happiness, to be cherished or acquired? I answer,—He that would be pious, must have a due regard to every ordinance of religion. He must be much in prayer; stated, occasional, and above all, ejaculatory and mental. He must be much in retirement and meditation, communing with his own heart and with his God. He must converse daily with the sacred scriptures, and with books of piety; and, as often as he can, with pious men. Above all, he must aim at being holy, exemplary, and useful in his life; and, as acting under the eye of God, make conscience of discharging every part of his duty. These are the acts by which pious habits are, through the grace of God, acquired; and the more any one abounds in them, the sooner will he arrive at perfection, both of holiness and happiness, for they are one and the same.

It therefore becomes us, my brethren, who are to teach these things to others, to examine often what progress we ourselves make in the study of piety, or whether we have as yet attained to any high degree of holiness. For if piety has not taken entire possession of our own souls, we are by no means qualified to recommend it strongly to our people. Are, then, our meditations of God frequent and sweet, and the aspirations of our souls, like incense, perpetually mounting before him? Is it our chiefest joy to think on his name and on his attributes, on his works and on his word? Do we resign our souls entirely to his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, obey his precepts, and trust in his promises? Is his favour our life, his providence our protection, his spirit our guide, his word our counsellor, and his kingdom the inheritance for which we are earnestly looking, and daily preparing?

Amidst all the changes of a transient life, can we say to the sea of passions, fears, and cares within, Be still; and can we lean on God as on a rock, immovable and calm amid the surrounding storm? Nay, can we not only rest on him when we contemplate the greatness of his power, but rejoice and triumph in him when we view the glory of his grace, as manifested in Christ Jesus? Do we realize to ourselves his presence, pant after higher and more frequent communion with him in this world, and ardently and affectionately long to see him, and to be forever with him in the other?

O God, my light and my life, my sun and my shield! I feel a joy surpassing the power of language to describe, when I consider myself as thy subject, thy servant, and thy son. I roll over myself, my soul, my all, on thy hands and on thy care. Bid me do or suffer what thou pleasest; do with me what seemeth to thee good, I confide in thy favour, rest in thy love, trust in thy promises, and devote myself to thy service. Let others choose their portion in this world; thou art my God, and I will bless and serve thee while I live, and look for thy salvation when I die, through Jesus Christ, my Saviour and my Redeemer.

Yes, my brethren, if pious dispositions are abundant and strong in our own souls, we shall naturally recommend them with fervour and force to others, and speak with boldness, as well as ease, when the truths which we utter are not conned words, but the genuine feelings of our hearts. Then, indeed, shall we possess true and persuasive eloquence, and bid fair to lead our people along with us to glory.—— Therefore, my brethren, whatever other men may do, let us be patterns of piety, and examples of holiness, to *the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers.*—But of a minister's good example,

without which piety cannot subsist, I shall have occasion to speak hereafter. In the mean time, let it be remembered, that he must be a man of knowledge and of study, a man of piety, and—of prayer.

## LECTURE V.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should be a Man of Prayer.*

" BEGIN all thine actions with prayer," said Pythagoras, " that thou mayest be able to accomplish " them." Alas, my brethren, what can we, frail creatures! do in our arduous work, if the Spirit, which is to be obtained by prayer, do not help us? We can neither attain to the right knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, nor can we recommend the gospel with success to others. It is only the same Spirit which dictated the oracles of God at first, that can make us understand them clearly. To him, therefore, should we apply for light and direction, by pouring forth our souls before him in frequent and fervent prayer.

O Spirit of light and of love! shed thy sacred beams on this benighted soul, that it may clearly understand thy holy oracles! Say, *Let there be light;* and there shall be light. Rise, Sun of righteousness! rise with healing under thy wings, that I may clearly see the path of salvation, and be able with certainty and precision to point it out to others. Thou hast ordained thy word to be a light to my feet, and a lamp to my paths; but if my eyes be not opened, how can I behold this beam, however bright it shineth? The blind must lose his way in the midst of light, and grope at noon-day. O speak then the word *Ephphatha.* Bid these eyes be opened, and the day-spring from on high to visit me! Then shall I behold the wondrous things of thy law, and be as a *star in thy right hand* to guide my people!

Prayer is the mounting up of the soul to God in the act of worship. It is that by which we, as it were, enter heaven, join the worshipping hosts assembled

there, cultivate acquaintance, and hold intercourse and communion with the Father of our souls, and draw down his choicest blessings. Prayer is the properest exercise in which a dependant, ignorant, weak and guilty creature, can be engaged; as it puts him in a condition to see what he is, and to receive what he needs. Prayer is not only the way to the fulfilment of promise, but is in itself the properest mean of producing and promoting in us all those noble and amiable dispositions of mind, which can make us happy and useful in this world, and meet for another. It raises the soul above every mean and sordid pursuit, weans it from earth, and gives it that taste and relish for holiness, which is requisite even for the enjoyment of heaven. It is the nourisher of piety, and the preparative and earnest of glory. For, as the mind will always derive a tincture and colouring from the cast of that company which a man frequents, so will the soul that is much in company with God, become in some measure like him. It will naturally copy those perfections which it admires and adores; and, according to the eternal laws of heaven, when it *beholds, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord*, will be *changed into the same image, from glory to glory.*

Thus necessary and useful is prayer to every christian; but more especially to every minister. Prayer is the life and soul of the sacred function.* Without it, we can expect no success in our ministry. Without it, our best instructions are barren, and our most painful labours idle. Before we can strike terror in-

* Incredibile dictu quantum lucis, quantum vigoris, quantum roboris atque alacritatis hinc accidat Ecclesiastæ, immo cunctis hominibus ad quodvis unquam negotium arduum suscipiendum et perag endum. *Erasm.*—Bene orasse est bene studuisse. *Luth.*.....Tria faciunt theologum, oratio, tentatio, meditatio. *Id.*....." *Ora et labora*; nil amplius docuit Oran."

to those who break the law, we must first, like Moses, spend much time with God in retirement. Prayer often gains success to little talents, while the greatest, without it, are useless or pernicious. A minister who is not a man of piety and prayer, whatever his other talents may be, cannot be called a servant of God, but rather "a servant of Satan, chosen by him for "the same reason that he chose the serpent of old; "because he was more subtile than any beast of the "field which the Lord God had made."

Every true Christian ought to be a man of prayer. All his views, all his affections, all his desires, hopes, and joys, ought to be constantly mounting on the wings of devotion, and flying before him into heaven. Every rub which he meets with in this thorny wilderness, every outward combat, every inward struggle, ought to make his groans and prayers rise incessantly, as memorials before that throne from which he expects aid and deliverance. Without this he is only a nominal, not a real christian. And if a christian, not addicted to prayer, is a man without any interest in Christ, without hope, and without God in the world; what a monster, O God, must that minister of religion be, that dispenser of the ordinances of the gospel, that intercessor between God and his people, that reconciler of man to his Maker, if he himself is not a man of prayer! In this should consist much of his aptitude for his work, and much of his ability to perform it. It should be his chief ornament, and his chief mean of obtaining aid. The plumage of the eagle serves it equally for ornament and flight. Strip him of that, and you leave him helpless and deformed, as a reptile of the dust. What his plumage is to the eagle, prayer is to the minister. Take from him this, and you fix him to the ground, without any thing to adorn or support him.

As we, my brethren, are ministers of reconciliation between God and man, prayer is one of our principal

duties. God often grants the grace intended for the people to the prayers of the minister* ; of that minister, who, like one of the angels who ascended and descended on Jacob's ladder, not only pleads the cause of God with the people, but the cause of the people with God. It is our business to lay before him constantly all the needs of those of whom we have the charge. It is our part to lament before him their sins ; those sins which our care and zeal cannot prevent nor remove. It is our part to solicit for them the riches of his mercy, and to deprecate his deserved indignation. It is ours to pray that the sinner may be converted, that the saint may be confirmed, that the weak may be strengthened, the diffident encouraged, and the presumptuous alarmed. The more numerous the wants and sins of our people are, the more frequent and fervent should our prayers be on their behalf. Not only their general state, but their particular cases, ought to be spread by us before the throne, and to be recommended, pleaded, and earnestly urged, before the Father of mercies.

" The law," says Philo,† " required that the high-
" priest should be raised above human nature, to a
" proximity with God ; that being placed, as it were,
" in a middle station betwixt God and man, he might
" supplicate God in behalf of man, and convey to
" men the grace that is bestowed by God."—And were we, my brethren, to consider ourselves in this light, and to act accordingly, it is impossible to conceive the mutual love, and endearing affection which it would create between us and our people. It is impossible to conceive the joy, the vigour, and the strength, with which this confidence, in the aid of our intercession and prayers, would inspire them in their temporal, but especially in their religious pursuits.—

* See James v. 16. Gen. xx. 7. Job xlii. 8.

† De Monarchia, lib. 2.

The patron and friend of the brethren of the Abbey of Ford was once overtaken at sea by a violent tempest, which arose a little before break of day, and threatened the vessel in which he sailed with immediate destruction. All, except himself, despaired, left off working, and resigned themselves to their fate.—"Do not, I beseech you, despond," said the pious man; "take courage, and exert yourselves for one "hour longer, for by that time we shall have the be-"nefit of the stated prayers of the monks of Ford; "by whom, I am sure, my case will not be forgot-"ten."*—The crew resumed their courage and their oars, and about the time which the good man proposed, the hearer of prayer calmed the storm, and gave deliverance.—The confidence of having a share in a good man's prayers, will naturally inspire, even the weak, with courage, and almost the profligate with piety.

We should, therefore, my brethren, be the mouths, and, in a qualified sense, the mediators between God and our people. A holy familiarity (if I may so speak) should subsist between God and us; and if we do not cultivate this by prayer, we are not only lost ourselves, but we are chargeable with the loss of souls which our prayers might have healed. For a prayerless minister is not only useless, but highly injurious to his people; by standing in the place of a faithful pastor, whose prayers might have drawn down a thousand blessings on his poor flock. Yes, a prayerless minister is chargeable with all the crimes which the prayers of a faithful pastor might prevent and with all the evils which they might remove. Has any of thy flock strayed, or fallen, or perished? How dost thou know but, if thy earnest prayers had been spread before the mercy seat, in his behalf, he had been recovered, supported, saved? Is any fair

* Vid. GROSE'S *Ruins*, &c.

blossom in thy portion of the vineyard blasted? Has any hopeful youth turned his back on the kingdom of heaven, or any unwary disciple denied the faith which he once professed, or fallen from the grace to which he once seemed to have attained? How dost thou know but he might have stood and persevered, if thou hadst prayed that his faith might not fail him; after the example of thy master, and according to the practice of his holy apostle Paul.*

God, my brethren, hath commanded us to pray, and promised that our prayers should be answered. Consequently we ought to tremble, lest, by neglecting this duty, the crimes of our people should become our own; and lest the ruin of their souls should be laid to our charge. Yes, my brethren, the consideration is as true as it is awful: Before the tribunal of Christ, a minister may be chargeable with the corruption of his fellow citizens, with the irregularity of his friends and neighbours, and with the evils which prevail in that part of the church which is entrusted to his care. In that terrible day of vengeance, a thousand unhappy souls may approach him, (may approach, perhaps, you and me) and say: "Ah, cruel, careless man! If thy piety and prayers "had aided our desires, feeble and faint as they often "were, we had repented in dust and ashes, and had "stood, on this day, on the other hand of Jesus, "and on the other side of this gulf, which will now "for ever divide us from the abodes of the holy and "happy. Farewell, mansions of bliss, farewell, re-"gions of glory! Cruel man, who hast helped to shut "us out; behold what was once our land of pro-"mise: behold it afar off; and then lie down with "us, in everlasting torments!"

This, my brethren, is not the reverie of a wandering fancy, nor the suggestion of superstitious fear.

* I. Thess. i. 2.

No; but a matter which gives us the most serious cause of being alarmed. For, if the unfruitful fig-tree is sentenced to the fire, and the servant who hid his talent condemned, how can the minister who neglected prayer escape? Will not the souls, whom his prayers might have helped to save, be swift witnesses against him, however inoffensive his conduct may have been in other respects? If Moses had suffered his hands to fall, and ceased to pray on the mountain, would not the blood of the fallen Israelites cry against him; and when they were able to conquer Amalek, when aided by his prayers, might he not, if those prayers had been cruelly withheld, be considered as the murderer of his brethren?

It was a custom of old, among many heathen nations, and I believe still prevails in some parts of the world, to make their kings, who were also their priests, answer for it with their life, if their people were visited with unhappy times, or unfruitful seasons. They supposed, that if they had been men of piety and prayer, and as intimate with the gods as they ought, those calamities might have been entirely prevented, or soon removed.—The custom may appear cruel, and the opinion on which it was founded unreasonable and ridiculous. It was extremely so, indeed, in nations, whose gods themselves had not in their hands the issue of events, nor any power over the seasons. But with respect to ministers of the gospel, the case is so very different, that, though the practice may not be defensible, under any administration of religion whatever, the opinion must be owned to be at least much less absurd; and shows how natural it is for men to look up to their priests, as their intercessors with heaven. Let us not then disobey the command of God, nor disappoint the faith of men, by not *stirring up this gift of God that is in us*, and trying the utmost that we can effect by our prayers; for that may be greatly beyond our

conception. If the prayers of a minister of the law had the power to open or to shut the heavens, to procure drought or rain, scarce or plentiful seasons, why may we not suppose the prayers of a minister of the gospel might be as prevalent with God? *If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.*

I would ask of those who make light of this observation, whether they can take upon them to set any limits to the efficacy of prayer, and say, "Thus "far the prayers of a faithful minister shall prevail, "and no farther. This is the *ne plus ultra* that his "requests can obtain from God." If any man shall take upon him to say so, I will not scruple to pronounce his presumption as strong as was the faith of that wrestler with God in prayer, who, in the imminent danger of his country, was heard to plead with strong cries and tears, "Lord, give the safety of my "country at this time to my prayers. I will cling to "the foot of the throne till I obtain it."—Yes, my brethren, the Almighty is so far from being offended at such bold requests, that he is represented in scripture as looking earnestly out for good men to make them, and greatly disappointed when men of such a spirit are not found: *I sought for a man among them* (says God of his degenerate people of old) *that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me, for the land, that I should not destroy it, but found none.**—When God is so merciful, who will dare say how far the fervent prayer of a righteous man will prevail.

Nothing, my brethren is so difficult or impossible with man, but by prayer it may be obtained. By prayer, Abraham, when he and Sarah were old, obtained the son of promise. By prayer, the children of Israel were delivered from Egyptian bondage and

* Ezek. xxii. 30.

oppression. By prayer, Moses pacified the wrath of God, so that he destroyed not his people, and by prayer and lifting up of hands, he routed the hosts of Amalek. By prayer, Joshua stopped the course of the sun. By prayer, Sampson brought down the house of Dagon upon the Philistines. By prayer, Solomon obtained incomparable wisdom: and by the same means, Hezekiah, at the point of death, had his life lengthened. By prayer, Daniel stopped the mouths of the lions, and the three children walked unhurt in the midst of the fiery furnace seven times heated. By prayer, Jonah was brought safe from his watery grave; and, by prayer, angels came down to enlarge St. Peter. What is there for which prayer will not avail? It cures diseases, dispossesseth devils, sanctifies the creatures to us, and unlocks the gates of heaven. Prayer hath power with God, looseus the bands of sin, purifies the soul, reforms the heart, draws down the aids of divine grace, and procures the fellowship of the holy spirit. It is seasonable for all times, fit for all places, necessary for all persons; and, without it, no business, however honest or lawful, can be supposed to prosper.

In a word, so extensive are the promises, and so large the grants, which are made in scripture to the prayers of the faithful, that there is scarce any temporal or spiritual mercy, which we should reckon it impossible to obtain, if we *always pray and not faint.* And if we do not, every public or private calamity within our knowledge, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature, may reproach us with being the cause, if not of their coming, at least of their continuance. For every evil which our prayers might prevent or remove, may be laid to our charge, if we are not men of prayer and of piety.

Seeing, then, my brethren, we are told, that whatever we shall ask in Christ's name we shall receive it, " is it possible that there should be any amongst us

"who can either live without prayer, or who can "pray but seldom, or who can pray without fervour "and zeal? Or can he confine all his prayers to a "cold, careless, and hasty rehearsal of some conned "form of speech, which may seldom suit the case or "circumstances of himself or of his people? Can he "possibly be so indifferent, when he beholds their "many miseries and calamities, and sees the great-"est part of them living in sin, and perishing before "his eyes under a load of guilt and impenitence?— "When the high priest, Aaron, saw part of his peo-"ple smitten by the hand of God, and expiring be-"fore him, he ran between the dead and the living, "he lifted his hands to heaven, he wept for the mi-"sery of such as fell before his eyes, he prayed, he "cried, he wrestled; and his prayer was heard, the "plague was stopped, and the sword of God's an-"ger was sheathed."

"This, my brethren, is the image of a good mi-"nister. Among his people he walks, I may say, "between the dead and the living. He sees by his "side some of his flock dead, and others ready to "expire, having only some faint or flattering signs of "life. He sees the invisible sword of God's wrath "hanging over these people. He sees reigning "crimes; he sees hastening death. All this he be-"holds; it is a spectacle which he has every day "before his eyes, and which every day makes those "eyes weep.—If he is one who is not affected with "this, he is not a pastor; he is a mercenary wretch, "who sees in cold blood the destruction of his flock. "He is either a minister fallen from the grace of the "gospel, or, to speak more properly, one who has "never received it. But, if this lamentable sight "affects him, ah! what must the first motions of "his grief and zeal be! He will address himself to "that God who woundeth and who healeth, who "killeth and who maketh alive: He will offer him

" prayers, and secret tears of grief and love, for his " people: He will remind an angry God of his an- " cient promises, and of his gracious covenant; he " will move his paternal heart, by his sighs, and " tears, and prayers; he will almost offer himself to " be accursed for his brethren*."

Yes, my brethren, a pastor who does not pray, who does not love prayer, who does not live a life of prayer, does not belong to that church which *prays without ceasing*. He is not united to the spirit of prayer and love. He is a stranger, who hath usurped the pastor's office, and to whom the salvation of his flock gives little concern.—Do we detest the character, and wish to avoid the fate of such a minister? Then let us be frequent and fervent in prayer. This will render our functions more useful, our labours much sweeter, and the wants and miseries of our people much fewer. Our prayers will be a source of usefulness to others; of support and consolation to ourselves. Whereas, if you take from a minister the spirit of prayer, you deprive him of his life and soul, and leave him nothing but a corrupt carcase, which will infect all who come near it. His service is nothing but cold inanimate words, and his office a burden; a task, painful to himself, and unprofitable to others. Even those public prayers which he is obliged to recite, so full of consolation to a good minister, so capable of supporting him under all the toils of his function, and of kindling in his soul sentiments of affiance and love to God,—those prayers are, to the indevout minister, disagreeable and irksome. Unhappy the people who have such a minister! If they are labouring under any calamity, will he appease the wrath of God, as Moses; or stand in the breach between the living and the dead, as Aaron? Alas! so far is he from being the means of re-

* Massilon.

moving these calamities, that he was, perhaps, a principal cause of their coming on. *Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds*, says God, *and I punished the goats**. Can he console them in trouble? alas he is utterly unacquainted with those consolations which are to be had only at the foot of the throne of grace, where he is very much a stranger.

"When tyrants and persecutors of the church "were born, it was believed by the people that signs "and omens, portending great disasters, appeared in "the heavens. The observation was owing, perhaps, "to the credulity and superstition of mankind. But "if we could indeed see the face of heaven, and "discern the greatest calamities which come upon the "church we should undoubtedly see the most dreadful "of them preceded by the birth of wicked ministers.— "The worst of tyrants, while they made the earth red "with the blood of martyrs, drew greater honour "and confirmation on the gospel, and increased the "number of the faithful. But wicked ministers "heap calamities on the church, without contributing "any thing to it's welfare. And when I speak of "wicked ministers, I do not suppose them defiled "with any gross crimes; I do not suppose them "worldly, covetous, dissipated, or given to any of "the levities, not to say enormities, of the age. I "suppose them to be only cold, remiss, and *negligent of prayer*†."

When, therefore, we consider the good fruits of the spirit of prayer, and all the train of evils which flow from the want of it, ought we not to take all possible pains to cultivate and cherish such a spirit, by being earnest and instant in all manner of prayer and supplication for ourselves and for others. This would, under God, be a sure mean of making us

* See Zech. x. 8. Lam. iv. 13. † Vid. Massilon.

holy and happy in ourselves, as well as useful to our people*.

* " Ouranius is a holy priest, full of the spirit of the gos-
" pel, watching, labouring, and praying for a poor country
" village. Every soul in it is as dear to him as himself, and he
" loves them all as he loves himself; because he prays for
" them all as often as he prays for himself. If his whole life
" is one continued exercise of great zeal and labour, hardly
" ever satisfied with any degree of care and watchfulness, 'tis
" because he has learned the great value of souls, by so often
" appearing before God as an intercessor for them. He
" goes about his parish, and visits every body in it; but vi-
" sits in the same spirit of piety that he preaches to them;
" he visits them to encourage their virtues, to assist them
" with his advice and counsel, to discover their manner of
" life, and to know the state of their souls, that he may in-
" tercede with God for them, according to their particular
" necessities. When Ouranius first entered into holy orders,
" he had a haughtiness in his temper, a great contempt and
" disregard for all foolish and unreasonable people: but he
" has prayed away this spirit, and has now the greatest ten-
" derness for the most obstinate sinners; because he is al-
" ways hoping that God will, sooner or later, hear those
" prayers that he makes for their repentance. The rude-
" ness, ill-nature, or perverse behaviour of any of his flock,
" used first to betray him into impatience, but now it raises
" no other passion in him than a desire of being upon his
" knees in prayer to God for them. Thus have his prayers
" for others altered and amended the state of his own heart.
" It would strangely delight you to see with what spirit he
" converses, with what tenderness he reproves, with what
" affection he exhorts and preaches to those for whom he first
" prayed to God. This devotion softens his heart, enlight-
" ens his mind, sweetens his temper, and makes every thing
" that comes from him instructive, amiable and affecting.
" He thinks the poorest creatures in his parish good enough,
" and great enough, to deserve the humblest attendances,

Of the matter, or manner of prayer, there is no occasion to speak in this place. I shall only observe, in so many words, that for the manner and language of prayer, we, as well as others, would do well to take the scriptures for our model. In them we are taught what to ask, and how to ask; insomuch that the weakest christian is not now so much at a loss as was the great philosopher of old, who could only say to God, "Give us that which is good, if we "should not know how to ask it; and avert that "which is evil, if we should ignorantly desire it." If the heart of a man is really affected with his guilt, misery, and mercies, and well acquainted with the scriptures, it will never be at a loss for the most plain, the most natural, and the most forcible language, to express it's feelings. And if it has the grace of humility, it will seek to God only through the name and merits of the appointed Mediator.

In regard to the manner to be observed in praying, I shall only say, that it should be as solemn, and serious, and fervent as possible. The length and frequency of the stated performance of this duty, I leave to your own hearts, with which, if they are right, they may safely be trusted*. I shall only remark, that we have much reason to rejoice in the frequent calls and opportunities, which we, above all other men, have to the high privilege of addressing God by prayer: by prayer, which opens to the mind a scene of greater things, and a source of higher consolations, than any thing here below; and

"the kindest friendships, the tenderest offices he can possi-"bly shew them. He presents every one of them so often "before God in his prayers, that he never thinks he can es-"teem, reverence, and serve those enough for whom he im-"plores so many mercies from God."..... Law's Serious Call, &c.

* Absit multa locutio, sed non desit multa precatio. *Aug.*

which fills the soul with the hope, and prepares it for the enjoymentof the presence of God and the glory of heaven. Hence it was, that the primitive Christians for some hundred years, besides their hours of prayer in the day-time, rose from their beds (and sometimes met publicly in their churches) to pray to God at midnight. I must also observe, that even our most private prayers ought to be cloathed in language, and expressed loud enough to be heard by ourselves, the better to engage our attention, and to get our hearts affected. For our devotion, like ourselves, must consist of body as well as spirit, so long at least as we are dwellers in the clay. I would not be understood as extending this direction to mental or ejaculatory prayer; for then it might sometimes be improper or inconvenient, though not always. *Remember me, O God, for good,* said Nehemiah in his heart, while in the presence of his king, and engaged in the exercise of his office: *I wait, O God, for thy salvation,* said Jacob aloud in the midst of a most interesting and important conversation, concerning the fate of his posterity.

Before I drop the subject of prayer, I must observe, that praise (which I include in it) is no less becoming a minister of the gospel. Praise is the noblest employment of our faculties, and that in which we approach nearest the perfection and felicity of celestial beings. It is, indeed, the highest prerogative of our nature, and the sublimest part of our worship. It is also the most delightful; for, while prayer reminds us of our wants, and confession reminds us of our sins, praise leads our thoughts to the pleasing recollection of mercies received, and of blessings still greater in prospect. It rejoices the soul, and cheers the spirits, and makes us both taste and trust the loving kindness of the Lord. In this exercise, therefore, it becomes us to be frequently engaged; for occasions are never wanting. Our own

mercies, and those of our people, with respect to soul and body, time and eternity; with respect to creation, preservation, and redemption, whatever way we turn our wondering eyes, suggest matter of perpetual praise and thankfulness. And if man should consider himself as the priest of creation, whose office it is to praise God, not only for his goodness to men, but to the irrational and mute creation also, how much more should ministers of the gospel present to God an offering for every creature? Be it then our delight in time, as we hope it shall be our work in eternity, to sing, without ceasing, praise to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us by his blood, to be kings and priests of God for ever.

## LECTURE VI.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should be Self-denied and mortified to the World.*

IF any man will be my disciple, saith our Lord, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. Self denial, which consists not only in watching and striving against every temptation, and in subduing every inclination to what is evil, but also in moderating our affections to what is even lawful and innocent, is the first and absolute condition which Christ requires of all his followers.—How much more of his peculiar servants!

I am sensible, however, that this doctrine of self-denial, and of mortification (which is but the same principle carried forward to more perfection), is not only unpleasant, but at present unfashionable. It is, therefore, the more necessary to insist upon it; that, if possible, we may convince ourselves of it's indispensible necessity. For this purpose a very little reflection may suffice us. Our appetites and passions are ready to rebel against the superior principle that should rule them, and to go beyond the limits assigned them by reason and religion. In other words, *the flesh lusteth against the spirit;* the lower against the higher part of our nature; so that it becomes the business of the christian to deny this part of himself, and kill or *mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof;* to subdue every inclination to evil, although the exertion may sometimes be painful, as the *cutting off the right hand, or plucking out the right eye.* It is only, in so far as we thus deny ourselves, that we are true christians, and advance in virtue and piety. It is only, in so far as we subdue or deny ourselves the instances of vanity and pride, that

we are humble; and we are heavenly-minded, only in the measure in which we subdue the instances of earthly affections. In short, every virtue is built on the ruin and self-denial of some vicious passion, or corrupt affection of our nature. It is therefore, as necessary to deny ourselves what would support and cherish the corruptions of our nature, as it is to pursue those things that would purify and exalt the soul. It is as necessary to mortify the body, with it's affections and lusts, as it is to cultivate and cherish the principle of holiness*. Accordingly, St. Paul practised this self-denial and mortification, as a matter of absolute necessity, to secure his salvation. Although he lived *in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake;* and, although he was also *full of signs and wonders, and mighty deeds,* and, *caught up into the third heavens;* yet, without this self-denial and mortification, he thought his virtues insecure, his salvation in danger, and all his pious labours as vain as *beating the air. So run I,* says he, *as not uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it to subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.*

Hence it appears, that he who does not thus run a life of mortification and self-denial, runs uncertainly; and that he who does not thus fight and subdue himself, fights to as little purpose as if he beat the air. What more then need be said of the necessity of bearing our cross daily, and living a life of mortification and self-denial? Even an apostle, preaching the gospel, with signs and wonders, in the midst of labour, distress and persecution, for Christ's sake, thought his own salvation in danger without this mortification and subjection of his body: And can we, who have no such pretensions, expect to get to heaven upon any other terms?

* See Law on Christian Perfection.

As we are called to be followers of Christ, to have a conformity to his life, and especially to have a fellowship with him in his sufferings, we must of necessity practice this christian duty, if we would tread in our Master's footsteps, and have a share in his kingdom. Without it, indeed, we cannot be partakers of the heavenly nature; for this cannot be attained, until we have first subdued our earthly nature, with all it's vain and corrupt affections. Then only can we have a true relish for divine and heavenly things, and have our souls in a fit frame to receive the divine grace, and to have fellowship and communion with the Divine Spirit. We ought, therefore, not only to bear our cross patiently, but to take it up cheerfully; and even to seek and embrace occasions of putting self-denial daily in practice. By the appointment of God, the expiation of sin seems to be made by suffering; and, therefore, we ought to show our readiness to *have a fellowship*, and to cooperate with the great Sufferer, by cheerfully bearing what we can of the burden. We ought to confess the debt which we have contracted, by at least something like an acknowledgement that it's penalty may be required of us.—And if we consider the cross in the light of discipline, and not of punishment, we may see no less reason to bear it willingly, however painful and difficult, in order to subdue the pride, vanity, corruption, and sensuality of our nature. Painful and difficult, I own, this duty may be; but, as it's utility, and even necessity, cannot be denied, nothing ought to deter us from it's practice. The satisfaction of doing our duty, and of living up to the dignity of our nature, in the present world, with the prospect of an eternal reward in the next, are motives abundantly strong to put us upon every possible exertion. And, if our powers are exerted, they will, by the grace of God, be always equal to our duty. If we have only resolution

to begin, and perseverance to go through, what is it that we cannot accomplish? By means of these, and of the grace of God, which is never wanting, we see what others have been enabled to perform; and the same road to glory still lies open. What noble instances have we in St. Paul, and in the primitive christians, of the exercise of self-denial, by which they kept their bodies under, endured hardships, and triumphed over the world? And, in latter times, what astonishing instances of it do we see in the mistaken cruelties exercised on their own flesh and blood, by devout and holy men, such as Francis, Simon, and one nearer home, St. Kentigern*, till they had perfectly attained their end? And if these men could perform so much, in cases in which we cannot suppose they had any supernatural assistance, what may not a man perform in those required instances of duty, in which he has the promise of the grace of God to aid him?

There is in the human mind, a spring, or impetus, which can do wonders, if properly excited, but whose effect is never so visible as when exercised in the cause of religion. The mind then rises above it's usual pitch, and seems possessed of a strength above it's own. Hence the miracles recorded of the constancy and suffering of martyrs, of the weakest sex and tenderest age.—And even in false religions, the belief of their doing what was pleasing to God, made

* Accounts of St Francis, and of Simon, (who lived forty years on the top of a pillar) may be seen in Mosheim, &c. and of Kentigern, the following specimen may suffice —Dormivit "super lapides, cineribus asperrimus substratis—etdum psal-"terim cantaret, in frigida aqua manebat.—In ipso libidinis "igni, vel invigilando, vel etiam dormiendo, ita extinctus "ut (sicuti discipulis suis quadam vice profitebatur) non ma-"gis ad speciosissimæ puellæ visum, aut tactum, quam ad "durissimi filicis stimularetur."—*Vita Kentig.*

men perform severer exercises than any of those which christianity requires. We might instance in the priests of Baal, of Moloch, and the whole fraternity of Bramins. The Athenian priests too, knowing the necessity of self-denial, made strange efforts to mortify the body, and subject it to the soul, that they might be more entirely devoted to the service of their gods, and perform the functions of their office without distraction*.

Now, if all these, from mere natural fortitude, could do and bear so much, what might not we endure or perform in that better cause, in which we have stronger motives, nobler promises, and brighter prospects? Let us remember how these considerations animated the martyrs in their fiery trials.—"How "can you endure the torments you are going to suf-"fer?" said a heathen to one of them, as he cheerfully walked to the stake. "Ah!" replyed the martyr, "you know nothing of the joy which I expect, "nor of the torment which I fear†."

Whoever keeps his eye steadily fixed on heaven and hell, the hope and the fear of the martyr will make little account of the self-denial required by the gospel. It is no more than is necessary, as the test of our virtue, and as the evidence of our fidelity, in this our state of trial. It is no more than is necessary, for making us fit members of the society of true christians here, and fit for being members of the society of heaven. We must, therefore, take up our cross daily, strive against every the least tendency and temptation to evil, and learn habitually to

* Legimus Hierophantes Atheniensium, postquam in pontificatum evicti erant, ut castissime sanctissimeque sacrum facerent cicutæ sorbitione castrari.—*Alex. ab Alexand. et Jerom. contra Jovian.*

† Nondum vidisti requiem quam speramus, nec tormenta quæ timemus.

maintain the conflict, till at length we shall, by divine assistance, be more than conquerors, and have the corruptions of our nature thoroughly subdued. These efforts are particularly necessary, till our good habits are sufficiently confirmed; after which, the trial of our virtue will be more easily borne, although we must at no time lay aside our arms, or dispense with our vigilance. We must be faithful unto the death, if we would then expect the crown of life.

Nor is it enough to resist our inclinations to what is wrong; we must also moderate our affections to those worldly and earthly objects and pursuits, which, within their proper bounds, may be lawful and innocent. One of the fathers, on observing that the excuses made by those who were invited to the marriage supper were all of this nature, cried out, "Perimus licitis!" The things that are allowed us may prove a snare, and occasion our destruction.

A christian must, therefore, not only suppress every motion of envy, malice and revenge, and cleanse himself of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, but also check and restrain all immoderate desires of wealth, reputation, pleasure, and even of such entertainments and amusements as are deemed, in a certain degree, to be innocent. He must habitually exercise that self-government, which requires every appetite and passion to be subject to the laws of right reason; and partake, with much moderation and temperance, of those recreations and pleasures which are not forbidden.—"Had this fly," said the dervise, holding in his hand a cup of honey in which a fly had been drowned, "had this fly only tasted of the "honey from the edge of the cup, she might have "been safe; but, wading in, she found destruction."

This duty of self-denial is the more necessary, as there is such constant occasion for it's exercise. Hence one of the ancient heathen moralists made self-denial, or, "bear and forbear," the sum of his system. Self-denial is a duty that must be daily and

hourly practised. It is the ordinary field of battle, in which we must fight the good fight of faith, and in which all our graces and virtues are to be exercised and put in practice. The opportunities of showing some of the more heroic virtues of patriotism, generosity, magnanimity, and the like, occur but seldom in the ordinary course of human life; but we have constant occasion to subdue the stirrings of passion, to suppress the motions of envy, malice, and resentment, and every impure and inordinate desire. And, in proportion as these weeds are killed in the soul, by the exercise of self-denial, every virtue regarding God, our neighbour, or ourselves, will of course, grow up and thrive; such as, devotion and charity, humility and meekness, peace and purity, equity and candour. And whoever is in the daily habit of practising these more useful and ordinary virtues, is surely the fittest for discharging the more rare and splendid ones, when any occasion is offered.

Such, then, is the utility and necessity of self-denial, even to an ordinary christian; but how much more to a minister of the gospel? We, my brethren, above all men, must be deaf to the calls of worldly ambition, dead to this life, and to it's pleasures, even when innocent; mortified to the body, and to all it's lusts and affections. We must be *temperate in all things, as were those who strove for the mastery;* and with infinitely more reason, considering, that while their prize was a corruptible, ours is an incorruptible crown. We must *use* what is lawful and necessary in *this world, as if we used it not:* and, by our example, teach our people to live a spiritual and heavenly life, as much as possible independant of this body, which we must soon live without, and of this world, which we must soon leave behind. We must make no account of the difficulty, as, by our earnest care, aided by the grace of God, it wil

soon be conquered. Indeed, when we subdue the horse and the elephant, it is with a bad grace we can allege, that over our own inferior nature our spirit cannot have the same command. You bring your horse and your ass to obey the rein; is your own nature more perverse and intractable than theirs?

## LECTURE VII.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should be Heavenly-minded.*

AFTER mortifying our affections to this world, we must next raise and fix them on another.—It is a saying of the Jewish rabbies, That the spirit of prophecy resides not with any man whose affections are not raised above the world, and fixed on heaven. With equal truth may we say, that the Spirit of God will not reside with that minister of the gospel, whose heart is not raised above all earthly things, whose soul is not associated to angels, and who is not changed into the image of his Master. And yet it must be owned, that the priests of all religions have, in almost all ages, been accused of having too strong a passion for the present world. What they were obliged to condemn in their doctrine, they were accused of encouraging in their conduct. Perhaps the charge was, in a great measure, owing to the conspicuous light in which persons of the sacred order are placed, and to the peculiar deformity with which this vice must appear, when, at any time, found in their character. It is, indeed, a feature peculiarly shocking in a minister of that religion, which teaches men to turn the whole bent of their mind towards another world, and to look down with a sovereign contempt on all earthly things.

A strong *love to the world*, and to *the things of the world*, may be called the basest, and most sordid of passions. The minister or even the man, in whom you discover it, you may safely mark down as one who loves neither God nor man. Neither devotion nor humanity can reside in the same breast with avarice. Hence the great apostle scruples not to call *the love of money the root of all evil;* and, with peculiar ear-

nestness and vehemence, he entreats the man of God to flee from it. Astonishing, indeed! that *the man of God* should be in any danger from such an enemy. Hath not he God for his portion? and for the portion of his family? Is it not written, *The Lord is the Levite's portion?* Is it not written, *Leave thy fatherless children to me, and let thy widow trust in me?* Who is there on earth that has such a security against want, so strong a charter for provision, as he who hath thus the promise of him to whom *the earth belongs and all it's fulness?* Who is there, in every respect, so secure and fortified as he? *His defence*, indeed, is the *munition of rocks*, firm as heaven could make it. Yet strong as the bulwark is, the enemy hath often, when it was not guarded, got within it's trenches. He hath often entered the sanctuary itself, and slain *the man of God*, even at the side of the altar.—How then can we be secure against an enemy that hath slain his thousands, unless we cultivate that heavenly-mindedness which will elevate us above the region of danger, and place us in a situation in which the shafts of this grovelling foe can never reach us?

Let us remember, my brethren, that an immoderate fondness for the things of the present world, whether discovered in keen desires of getting more, or in a selfish spending or hoarding of what one already has, is inconsistent with the character of a true christian, who must always consider himself as a citizen of that country which puts no value on such things, and as a sojourner and stranger upon earth. But how much more is this cast of mind inconsistent with the character of a minister, whose views and affections ought to be exalted above those of other men, and whose conduct should always point him out as a *man of God*, and a denizen of heaven?*

* The apostolic canons (Can. iv.) appoint those priests and

Yes, my brethren, if all the rest of the world should *mind earthly things*, we ought to mind the things that are heavenly. We ought to remember that we are born to nobler prospects than any thing which this world can set before us; that we are engaged in a more important work than the pursuit of it's trifles; and that it is no less dangerous than unbecoming to allow our souls to be enamoured of the things of earth, of sense, and of time. Like the chariot-wheel in the mire, the soul will move heavily towards heaven, when it's affections are deeply set upon the world. For our faculties are so circumscribed and limited, that we cannot intensely pursue two ends so remote as earth and heaven. If we attend very much to the first, the world will believe that we pay no attention at all to the last; as indeed we cannot pay it much, since no man can serve two such opposite masters as God and Mammon. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Far be it from me, however, to encourage such inattention and indifference to our circumstances as might lead us to any embarrassing or distressful situation. This would equally hurt our usefulness, and be still more injurious to our neighbour. Our circumstances too, too often need all the economy in our power to make them barely supply our necessary wants, without giving sometimes one half of what we would wish to relieve the poor. In this too common and unhappy case, it is our business to avoid every thing superfluous, or unnecessary, or expensive; in all things to retrench what we can, to give in the measure we are able, but to take care to be always within our income, however small, so as *never to owe any thing to any man, but love.* Thus

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bishops to be deposed who immerse themselves in worldly affairs. See 2 Tim. ii. 4.

a small matter, by the blessing of God, will go far; and a cheerful, contented, and heavenly frame will be maintained, in circumstances far from affluent. And, even in their low estate, such greatness of mind becomes those who expect to be soon *kings*, as well as *priests to God*. Though now, like their master, their kingdom is not of this world, they may well rejoice in the sure and near prospect of a better inheritance.

Therefore, my brethren, let us, who not only expect to be kings ourselves, but who offer crowns of glory to others, despise every transitory vanity: let us, who tell others that the care of the soul is the *one thing needful*, beware of acting, at any time, in opposition to what we say, and of making our practice a contrast to our sermons. Otherwise, what occasion shall we give to the wicked to triumph, and to the godly to mourn, on seeing *the gold become dim*, and *the most fine gold changed*; on seeing *the sons of Sion, the king's children, who should be clothed in scarlet, embrace the dunghill?*

God forbid, my brethren, that any of us should thus give the preference to the present world. Could Moses, when permitted to contemplate the effulgence of the divine glory on the mount, prefer to fix his eye on the gold with which the children of Israel corrupted themselves on the plain? Or could the three disciples, amid the splendours of the transfiguration, and in the presence of Christ, of Moses, and of Elias, prefer any wordly joy to that glorious vision? It is not possible. And shall we, who, like them, are admitted to the honour of enjoying the most exalted and refined pleasure which results from the fellowship and communion of our God, allow our affections to fix on gross and earthly objects? Shall we not rather, from the eminence on which we stand, look down with contempt on the insignificant trifles which occupy the thoughts of wordly men;

and view the world itself as only the transient abode of still more transient beings? Instead of loving it, shall we not felicitate ourselves with the prospect of our being so soon to leave it, and anticipate the everlasting glory to which we shall be raised above it? In this world, then, my brethren, having thus so high and so near a prospect in another, *seek ye great things for yourselves? Seek them not**. "Leave all," says Augustin, "and you shall find all: For every "thing is to be found in God, by him who, for the "sake of God, despiseth every thing."

"Since you pretend to so reputable a character," said Socrates to a man of Athens, "and since you "are a denizen of the most famous city in the world, "are you not ashamed to make it your business to "acquire riches, or renown, or power, and, at the "same time, slight the treasures of truth and wis- "dom, and neglect to improve your soul to the high- "est perfection of which it is capable?"

Had Socrates been acquainted with the character which we bear, and the city to which we belong, how should he address us? "Ye men of God," he might say, "and ambassadors of the MOST HIGH, "(for such, ye say, ye are), what sordid trifles must "all that mortals admire appear to persons of your "divine and august character! Ye disciples of the "Son of God, what holiness becomes your profes- "sion! Ye heirs of the unspeakable glory of hea- "ven, what dross and dung must ye count the earth, "and all that it contains! Surely you would be a- "shamed to covet more of this world than food and "raiment; that is, the bare necessary accommoda- "tion of your transient passage. Solely intent upon "the business of your heavenly calling, your ambi- "tion, no doubt, centres all in heaven. If you can- "not make the world wise, you at least spend your

* Jer. xlv. 5.

"lives in attempting it; and, if you can do no more, "you surely raise your own souls to a pitch of heav- "enly-mindedness, of which blinded mortals have "hardly any conception."

So should any one imagine, who would form his ideas of the elevation of our souls from the nature of our holy office and profession. And with much reason; for what a glorious advantage does our office give us for excelling all others in heavenly-mindedness! Our life is devoted to the contemplation of God and heaven; to the preaching of Christ and his salvation. Others are glad of the leisure of the Sabbath, and some other small portions of time snatched from their daily business; but our whole life is a Sabbath, in which we have almost nothing to do, but to think and to speak of God and of heaven. What a blessed life is ours, if we have that elevation of soul, and that heavenly frame of mind, which suits it!

And if we, my brethren, wish to attain to this elevation of mind, this divine temper, we must labour to impress our hearts with a strong conviction, that all those things which the men of the world love and pursue so keenly, have in them no power of conferring any real or lasting felicity. To feed, clothe, and lodge a dying body, for a few years, is the full amount of them. And surely this is rather the felicity of a brute, than of a rational, immaterial, and immortal essence, such as the human soul, whether in the body or out of it; for this alone is *the man*.

We must therefore accustom ourselves to think, that the true happiness of this true man, in the life that now is, as well as in that which is to come, even through all the revolutions of eternity, consists in humility, purity, charity, and piety; in the consciousness of possessing, and in the joy of exercising, these and the like virtues; in the present sense of the divine favour, and in the ravishing hope of enjoying

that favour for ever and ever. We must frequently raise our souls to the contemplation and almost vision of God, and call forth all their powers to the imitation of those moral attributes which constitute his chiefest glory and excellence, till we perceive our natures assimilated to his; till we feel our spirits rejoice with hope, and long with desire, to be eternally and inseparably with him. It is this sacred feeling, this unspeakable joy, that will effectually convince us, that all other things that can possibly engage the cares, the hopes, and the fears of mortals, are nothing but emptiness and delusion, vanity and vexation of spirit. They are like those dreams which amuse at midnight the unhappy wretch who is doomed to suffer in the morning. It is this deep, strong, and abiding conviction of the emptiness and delusion of those things that court the outward senses, and of the superlative and unspeakable value of unseen and everlasting things, that must elevate our souls above every mean and sordid purpose and pursuit, and inspire them with ardour and perseverance to attain those habits of holiness and virtue, which alone can make us truly and eternally happy.

The busy mind of man must always have something to engage it's attention; and if we, who are the guides of mankind, cannot convince them that this something ought to be the chief good, let us at least show them that we are perfectly convinced of this truth ourselves. While we direct them to fix their ambition on the things that are heavenly, let our own be disengaged from the things that are earthly, and our affections visibly and strongly placed on the things that are above. While we preach to them, that the riches, honour, and glory of this world are empty and evanescent things, and that the love, the favour, and the friendship of God, and the imitation of his moral excellence, are the only satisfying joys, the only true and durable happiness, let our conduct

show them that we speak from feeling and conviction, and that our souls find a peace, joy, and felicity unspeakable, in those spiritual, heavenly, and eternal objects, which we recommend so warmly to their care and attention. It is incredible what weight this elevation of soul and sanctity of conduct would give to our discourses, and how much it would increase their influence on mankind. When we tell them, that to know, love, imitate, and enjoy God, is the chief and only felicity of man, for time and for eternity, if we confirm what we say by our own example, it will strike with a force that is almost irresistible, and will effectually convince and persuade our hearers. To this heavenly-mindedness, under the grace of God, it was owing, that the first preachers of christianity made such noble conquests. They were crucified to the world, and the world to them, and all the *impetus* of the soul was directed to a single object. When this is the case, man can yet do wonders; especially in that work in which Omnipotence is engaged to help him.

Let us then acquaint ourselves more and more with God, and seek our felicity and joy in the contemplation, love, and adoration of his glorious perfections; in meditating on his word, trusting in his providence, relying on his promises, and imitating his moral attributes. And, believe it, my brethren, our happiness will be always growing in proportion to the progress which we make in this heavenly study; insomuch, that even in the present world, we may arrive at a degree of joy as far above what we yet feel or conceive, as the impressions made upon us by objects, when awake, exceed the faint representation which they make on our fancy when asleep; that is, as much as the presence of our dearest friend exceeds the indistinct idea left of him by a dream at night.

And is it possible, my brethren, that we have in us a capacity of climbing nearer the throne of God, than we almost ever do in the present life, and shall we not have the ambition to attempt it? Shall we not make every effort to break the charm that binds our infatuated soul to it's dark and earthly mansion, and mount on the wings of joy and desire towards heaven? Shall not the power of the gospel, which we preach to others, be more manifest in our own life and conversation, so as to make us live by faith and not by sense, and fix our souls immoveably on the pursuit of holiness, on the contemplation of God, and on the joys of Paradise? The unspeakable joy which this exercise would raise in us, would, on earth, be a foretaste of heaven; and the ravishing hope it would create in us, of being soon raised to the glory which we now long and look for, would make this world and all it's glory vanish; so as to have no temptation to draw our thoughts from the object of our felicity. And the more we contemplate God, the more we are transformed to his likeness; insomuch, that, on earth, we go on with the progressive glory and joy of heaven. For what is the glory and joy of heaven, but the uninterrupted contemplation, and unceasing imitation of God, the source of all blessedness and perfection? And shall we not have as much as possible of this glory and joy even now; and, in the hope of having more of it in his presence hereafter, *purify ourselves, even as he is pure?*—It is, indeed, astonishing, that we, whose business it is to meditate on these things ourselves, and to urge them on others, are not more firmly established in the practical belief of the delusive vanity and emptiness of this world, whose fashion passeth away, and whose dazzling glories are but flying shadows. It is astonishing that our souls are not raised above it, and for ever fixed on the joyful contemplation of God, and on the glorious

hope of being soon eternally and inseparably with him, in the abodes of knowledge, holiness, and happiness, with all the society of blessed and immortal spirits. That men of our profession, occupation, and prospect, should almost think or speak of any thing else, and much less *seek any great things for ourselves* in the present life, is, when the matter is duly weighed, abundantly astonishing. But that we should not only think and speak, but often act, like those who have their portion in this world only, is a mournful as well as an astonishing consideration*.

What should we, therefore, do, my brethren, but endeavour, by retirement, meditation, and prayer, to fix our hearts more on God, and on the superlative glory of spiritual and eternal things; till we feel stronger impressions of their worth, and are more convinced of their reality and nearness. Then the joy and happiness arising from the contemplation of God, and the glory of his kingdom, will make these themes alone delightful, and give them a decided preference in our estimation. Then, elevated above the trifles of time, our thoughts will be engrossed with the eternity which we preach, and we shall scorn the groveling pursuits of earth ourselves when we recommend heaven to others. Then, having chosen God for our only portion, we shall delight ourselves in his favour, and love him, when we know him, with all the affections of our soul. And, having attained to this love, it will extinguish the immoderate love of all inferior things, as the intense beams of the sun extinguish fire.

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* See Prin. Leechman's Syn. Serm.

## LECTURE VIII.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should be Heavenly in his Conversation.*

OF all the creatures under heaven, man is the only one that has religion, and the only one that has speech. A plain intimation that the latter was meant to be subservient to the former, and that the creature endowed with both was designed to be the priest of the creation, who should offer up, in the name of all, that tribute of praise and homage which is so due to the great Creator. Distinguished by reason, by religion, and by speech, it was intended that he should employ these talents in the contemplation and praise of the divine perfections; in celebrating the wonders of creation, the equity of God's government, the goodness of his laws, the manifestations of his love, especially in the redemption of mankind by his Son, and the honour and happiness of being devoted to his service. But if this should be the occupation of men, how much more of ministers, who are peculiarly consecrated to the service of God and of religion; and who, as the *salt of the earth*, ought to season every company of which they make a part.

Yes, my brethren, every minister ought to lay out all his faculties in doing good to his people; and, for this purpose, he ought particularly to take heed to his conversation. If every *idle word* which ordinary christians speak, they have an account to give at the day of judgment, how wise, how holy, how heavenly should be the conversation of a minister of the gospel, of a servant of Jesus, of him whom God hath sent with *his word in his mouth*, in order *to plant* (and, as it were, by a kind of creation and *fellow-working* with himself, to add to the inhabi-

tants of) *the heavens*? Shall those hallowed lips, which one while deliver the most important truths, in the name of God, and in the room of Christ, at other times defile themselves with vain words and trifling discourses? Shall the same fountain cast forth sweet and bitter waters? Accustomed to the songs of angels, what relish can they find for those levities, to say the best of them, which often find place in the mouths of the children of men? What an incongruity would this be in an ambassador sent from God * ?

Our conversation, my brethren, should always be marked with a peculiar character of gravity, modesty, and piety. By this we should show that we are the *men of God* upon earth, and a different class from the generality of mankind. The mouth of a minister of the gospel, to use the language of holy writ, should be a *sharp sword*, and his words *polished shafts*, used on all occasions in the service of his Master, and never allowed to contract any rust by being seldom employed. What then shall we say of those ministers who have seldom any thing serious, edifying, or heavenly, in their ordinary conversation? Ah! what irrecoverable opportunities do they let go; what precious moments do they lose in trifling! How do they know but one well-timed word might be blessed as the mean of saving a soul? *A word in season, how good is it!* How do they know but their private labours might be more useful than their public discourses? Their public discourses may never be heard by those who most need them; but who, from ignorance, indolence, or profaneness, may not come to hear them. And, if they should, they may not apply them to themselves; or, at least, may not be out of the need of having them

* Novæ sortis oportet illum esse, qui, Deo jubente, canit.—SENECA.

enforced by considerations peculiar to themselves, and very improper, perhaps, to be urged in public. Speaking to them privately, separately, and suitably to their various circumstances and conditions in life, may produce happier effects than either they or he could look for.

In our public ministrations, my brethren, men may come to hear us on their guard. But, in familiar discourse, this guard is thrown off; the harness is, as it were, drawn aside, and the access to the heart is open. Sermons are addressed to multitudes, and cannot always be made to suit the particular case of every hearer. Besides, they want that life and energy, that address and insinuation, which always attend a private conference. Hence, we find our Saviour himself making converts much oftener by his private conversation than by his public teaching, though *he spake as never man did.* And such of his ministers as imitate his example, will be found to do more good in this way, perhaps in a few minutes, than by the labours of whole days in the pulpit. "Thou hast done more harm," said once a Lord Chancellor of England to a faithful minister, "thou hast done more *harm* by thy private exhor-"tations in prison, than thou didst by thy preaching "before thou wast put in."

Thus, my brethren, should we embrace every opportunity, in private as well as in public, of giving conversation a religious and heavenly turn; and of leading men insensibly, and ere they are aware, to holiness and virtue. And whether the world call this *in season,* or, *out of season,* we thereby approve ourselves to God and conscience. Nay, even those fools who may in words condemn us on this account, must in their heart esteem us, and confess that we act with propriety. For this tribute vice must for ever pay to virtue.

All our conversation, my brethren, ought to aim at the glory of God and the good of souls. For this purpose, is it not necessary to make any display of knowledge or learning? No; to make men know practically and spiritually those things which in theory, perhaps, they know already; to make those notions that float in the head sink into the heart, and influence the conduct; to kindle in the soul the love of holiness and virtue; to stir up the affections to the love of God and man; to call home the thoughts to the consideration of our present and future state, and other eternal and important truths, so as to discover a new sweetness and use in things with which we are already acquainted,—these, and the like, are the great objects which, in our conversation, we ought always to have in view. And did christians in general, and we in particular, attend to our character and hope, our thoughts would surely be much more occupied in the contemplation of our blessed immortality and home in heaven, and in comforting and encouraging one another to submit cheerfully to the inconvenience of the way, to overlook the intervening moment, and to fix our eye immoveably on those glories at which, in a short time, we expect to arrive.

Such subjects of conversation are flowers which afford sweets that can never be exhausted. But, in extracting them, we must avoid every thing that may appear stiff, formal, or severe, in our manner. Our speech and carriage should be meek and modest, as well as grave; and our behaviour always engaging and affable.—"His piety," says the biographer of a late pastor*, "though awfully strict, was inexpressibly amiable. It diffused such a sweetness through "his temper, and such benevolence over his countenance, as none who knew him can ever forget.

* Bishop Benson.

"—He looked upon all that the world calls impor-
"tant, it's pleasures, it's riches, it's various competi-
"tions, with a playful and good-natured kind of
"contempt, and could make persons ashamed of
"their follies by a raillery that never gave pain to
"any human being. Of vice he always spoke with
"severity and detestation, but looked on the vicious
"with the tenderness of a pitying angel. Wherever
"he went, he carried cheerfulness and improvement
"along with him."

Cheerfulness, my brethren, becomes us too; for when our eye, like Stephen's, is stedfastly fixed on the glory of heaven, our face, like his, may well *shine as that of an angel.* "Serve God, and be cheerful*," and you act most agreeably to the genius of our holy religion. Cheerfulness disposes the mind to the noblest acts of religion, to the love, adoration, and praise of God, to complacency in his government, and trust in his promises. On the other hand, these, and all the other acts of devotion, reciprocally dispose the soul to cheerfulness, and joyful serenity. To contemplate the perfections of God, and the glorious display of them in his works, of creation, providence, and redemption; to love him, serve him, praise him, trust, and rejoice in him; these are surely the most delightful exercises of the soul; and, the more that any one abounds in them, the more he anticipates the joy of heaven.

Of all the men in the world, then, cheerfulness both in countenance and conversation, best becomes us, if we live up to our profession and character. Mirth, however, belongs almost altogether to others. "It is not the part of a minister of the gospel, at any
"time, to excel in farce and comedy. Leave it to
"jesters and buffoons to spread the laugh, and set
"the table in a roar." That joy, which is the fruit

* The motto of a late bishop.

of the spirit, and which not only becomes, but is enjoined on us, is of a different cast, and of a higher kind. It is calm, cheerful, and serene, as the upper regions of heaven; and is as different from mirth as wisdom is from folly. *Foolish talking and jesting**, to us, above all men, *are not convenient:* to us who should know best, and always remember, that *for every idle word which men speak they shall give an account at the day of judgment*, and receive a recompence suitable to it's tendency; to us, "whose "office must frequently present to our thoughts the "afflictions of this mortal state, the holiness of God's "law, our own grievous imperfections, the deplo-"rable sins of many others, and the final sentence "which awaits us all†."

With an office so serious, and a character so sacred as ours, my brethren, levity and mirth but ill accord. To endeavour to make religion agreeable, is proper, but to make ourselves agreeable, by helping our company to forget religion, is exceedingly faulty. The bulk of mankind, indeed, expect, whatever they do themselves, that we should act consistently with our character, and retain always, in our conversation and countenance, such sacred gravity and such cheerful and modest meekness, as may procure respect to religion, even from those who do not love it. And, if we cannot thus maintain the dignity of our character and the credit of religion, wherever we are, then our solemn and sudden silence, our abrupt departure, or reluctant reproof, as prudence may direct, should mark our indignant sense of what is going on. To listen to any thing immoral, without shewing that we are displeased, in us is to be prophane. To give the sanc-

* Aristotle places this among his half-virtues; but the gospel, a nobler system, gives no room at all to it.

† Secker.

tion of our presence to vice, without any symtom of disapprobation, were to betray our trust to God. For, in this sense, he who is not with him is against him. In mixing with our people, therefore, we should be their models, and not their companions or imitators. We are at the head of our flocks, and ought to be their guides. But if any of them be of such a cast as not to permit this, we ought not to mix with them at all; but to *separate ourselves from so untoward a generation.* In so unhappy a case as this, "our visits to sinners," as one of the fathers observes, "ought to be as rare as were the appear-"ances of angels to the saints of old." Any intimacy, indeed, which we may have with the irreligious or prophane, beyond what common civility requires, or the prospect of reforming them allows, is at the expence of our character, and, I may add, of our piety too. Besides, our conduct will offend the weak, and excite the contempt or indignation of the wise and good, so that we cannot be useful to either.

In all the intercourse which we may have with our people, we should be careful to interfere as little as possible with their worldly affairs. "For a priest "to become a judge," says Plato, "would be to de-"file himself, and to derogate from his character." To lay hold of every opportunity of disposing all men to a mutual good opinion and good will, is indeed our duty. But any thing further will in all likelihood draw upon us the hatred of one party, and the common imputation of being meddling. The office of umpire, in settling differences, was declined by our Lord himself; and his example ought, in every thing, to be a law to us. Who, as he said of himself, hath made us lawgivers or judges? Our own province is enough for us. If ever we are led beyond it, it should be only to plead and support the cause of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow. To turn the attention of our people, as much as we

can, to the *one thing needful*, is our great concern. For this purpose, we should study their different characters, and be well acquainted with passages of scripture suited to the various ages, relations, and circumstances of life; so as to have *a word in season* for persons of every denomination; and something suitable to say to every one of our people, with whom we have an opportunity of meeting or holding any conversation. In the happy skill of making a dextrous use of every such opportunity, consists much of that *aptness to teach*, which the apostle sets down as one of the qualifications of every good and faithful pastor.

We are seldom aware how much good or evil there may be in our ordinary conversation. It is generally *a savour of life or death* to our people. When we preach, we only do what all clergymen, whether good or bad, are bound to do; and therefore we may be considered by many as only going through a piece of form. But if our conversation, like our preaching, be *good for the use of edifying, and minister grace to the hearers*, it will yield it's fruit unto holiness, and awaken souls to a sense of piety and religion. For it is by our life and ordinary discourse, and not by our sermons, that men will judge of us. And as we are consecrated to God and religion, as much, at least, as the churches and altars at which we serve, idle and ordinary discourse would profane us, as much as churches and altars would be profaned, if applied to ordinary uses; and then what could we expect but that the spirit of God should be grieved*, and leave our temple desolate. Let us, therefore, look well to ourselves, and see that our con-

* See Eph. iv. 29, 30. Where, it is clear, that, by the conversation that does not edify, and does not minister grace to the hearers, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

versation, as well as our sermons, may always tend to edify.

The children, especially, demand our particular notice; and to edify them should be one great end of our conversation. To children the great Shepherd of the sheep himself paid the utmost regard, and, in the most endearing manner, recommended them to us. *Feed my lambs.* A matter that was marked with such importance by our Lord, may well demand our attention. Yes, my brethren, the nurture of the young is a sacred charge, of which God will one day require an account. Children are tender plants, which the great Master of the vineyard hath particularly enjoined us to cultivate; and which we should, therefore, endeavour, with all possible care, to rear. Childhood and early youth alone are the proper season of instruction, for those especially of the lower class, who make the bulk of mankind. Once they are advanced in years, the toils and cares of life leave them no leisure for improvement in knowledge; and, with respect to those in more opulent circumstances, they will not then submit to our teaching. At any rate, religious impressions never take such a strong hold of the mind as when they are made in the earlier years of life. The habits acquired in that period, be they virtuous or vicious, are most likely to adhere to us till death, and to follow us to eternity. Hence the urgent necessity of every possible care to instil good principles early into the minds of children*. And the necessity upon us is by so much the greater as parents are the more negligent. Ah! poor lambs! capable of becoming angels, what must become of you, if both parents and pastors neglect their duty? If they do not *train you up in the way in which you should go*, how can they expect that, when you are old, you will find it?

* Quo semel est imbuta recens, servabit odorem
Testa diu. HORACE.

We, therefore, my brethren, must improve the seed-time, otherwise we lose the hope of the harvest. On our diligence in this depends, not only the success of our own ministry, but that of our successors in other generations. If, after baptising children into the faith, we then neglect them, we act the part of that barbarous parent, who instead of nourishing the child that is born to him, cruelly exposes him in the waste and howling wilderness. Nay, in as much as the soul excels the body, our cruelty exceeds that of such a monster, if we neglect this part of the trust reposed in us.

If we neglect to train the children properly at first, no future care can atone for such a crime. How can you build the house of which you never laid the foundation ? Take no timely precaution against the contagion to which youth is exposed, and no future care will cure the malady. Once they are grown men, they will never submit again to become children. So sensible of this were the wise Lacedemonians, that, when they were required to give fifty children as hostages, they chose rather to give fifty of the most eminent men in the state, whose principles were already formed, than children, to whom the want of early instruction would be a loss altogether irreparable. It would be, according to the beautiful expression of Pericles, like cutting off the season of Spring altogether from the year.

Let us then descend often to the capacity of children. Let us employ them, as much as possible, in storing their memory with the maxims of piety, with passages of scripture, with psalms, and hymns, and prayers ; and give them, if we can, from time to time, some small present of this kind to secure their diligence. Early habits of diligence and application will be of great account to them in passing through the present world, as well as in preparing them for another. By this means, they learn in time to en-

counter any difficulty, from the habit of surmounting hardships. Let us therefore be careful to impose tasks upon them. Let us be zealous to instruct them. It may not be long (as we and they are stepping off) that we shall have it in our power to do them any service; or, if it should, the task will be daily growing more difficult. *Can the Ethiopian change his hue, or the leopard his spots? then may they learn to do good who have been long accustomed to do evil.*—What should recommend this duty to us more especially is, that, in this part of our labour, we have most probability of success, and least danger of being infected ourselves. For of this danger we run no little risk, when we mix with the grown up, on whom the leprosy of sin may have already come to such a height as to render the disease extremely dangerous to others, as well as to themselves.

Be it our serious care, then, to embrace every opportunity of training up the young in the knowledge of God, and in the love and practice of religion; urging the parents to join us, and assuring them that their own happiness or misery must depend on the education of their children in virtue and piety. "If "you wish to be a saint," says the sacred book of the Persians, "give good instruction to your chil- "dren; for their virtuous actions will be imputed "to you." Nay, we may assure them, that, generally, even in the present world, their families must rise or fall in proportion as their children are virtuous or vicious.—An object of such magnitude, therefore, demands our early and continued attention. When they are yet babes, let us give them *the milk of the word*,—the first plain rudiments of religion. Let us give them stronger meat when they are able to receive it. Let us instruct them, let us confirm them, and never lose sight of them, nor suffer early impressions to wear off; but improve them to settled habits of piety and virtue, and lead them to ratify

their covenant with God, by their own personal deed, in the holy communion.

Such, my brethren, should be the constant tenor of our conversation, and such, especially, our care to inculcate early piety. For, if it be the duty of every christian to *take heed that nothing proceed out of his mouth, but what is good for edification, that it may minister grace to the hearers*, what shall become of that minister of the gospel who does not take still greater heed to his duty, which, like every other, is more peculiarly binding upon him*?—Yes, my brethren, if all the rest of the world should have their conversation, some of earth, and some, perhaps of hell, *our conversation* should always be, as much as possible, *in heaven*. Propriety of character requires this of the followers and ambassadors of Jesus, and practice would make it soon sit easy on us, and familiarise us to sublime ideas and heavenly sentiments.

The art of giving a spiritual and heavenly turn to conversation, and of improving every subject to our advancement in holiness and virtue, is best learned from our Saviour's discourses recorded in the gospels, where we meet, on every proper occasion, with the most beautiful examples of it. There, how natural and easy the transition from things earthly to things heavenly; from the meat that perisheth to that which endureth to eternal life; from the water of the well of Jacob to those living waters, of which he who drinketh shall never be athirst again! There, we meet with nothing forced, nothing strained, nothing unsuitable to the occasion, or to the nature of the company. For our Lord, in this, as in every thing else, exemplified his own precept, of *not casting pearls before swine*; and taught us, that our speech should not only be good, but also suitable and well timed

* Inter seculares nugæ, in ore sacerdotis blasphemiæ.—BERNARD.

—And did we, my brethren, endeavour always to imitate the example of his conversation, we should soon find our progress in holiness to be vastly more than we looked for, and at length arrive at a degree of it which few attain, because few attempt it.—That we have a moral capacity for such exalted improvement is plain from the example of those who, in this and many other parts of our duty, attained to a degree of perfection, which to some, may appear hardly credible. In proof of this, I will not go back to patriarchs or prophets, martyrs or apostles, who may be supposed to have had the aids of divine grace, in a more peculiar and extraordinary measure. I will only repeat the character which an intimate acquaintance of his gave of a truly eminent pastor of the last age; of "a bishop (as he says) that had the "greatest elevation of soul, the largest compass of "knowledge, the most mortified, and most heavenly "disposition that I ever yet saw in mortal;—that "had the greatest parts, as well as virtues, with the "most perfect humility that I ever saw in man;— "that had so sublime a strain in preaching, with so "grave a gesture, and such a majesty of thought, "of language, and of pronunciation, that I never "once saw a wandering eye where he preached, and "have seen whole assemblies often melt in tears be- "fore him: And of whom I can say, with great "truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with "him for above two and twenty years, I NEVER KNEW "HIM SAY AN IDLE WORD, OR THAT HAD NOT A DI- "RECT TENDENCY TO EDIFICATION: And I never "once saw him in any other temper, but that which "I wished to be in in the last minutes of my life*."

What may not our earnest endeavours accomplish in those matters in which we are sure the grace of God will aid us!

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* Character of Abp. Leighton, in Burnet's Pastoral Care.

## LECTURE IX.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should set a holy Example to his People.*

IT is not by our conversation and sermons only, my brethren, that we must edify our people:—Our example should always and uniformly preach to them. The generality of mankind are better judges of our example than of our sermons, and are apt to form their notion of the gospel from *our* lives, and of holiness from *our* example. A good example is so necessary to gain weight and credit to our sermons, that they have seldom any success without it. Our hearers, it would seem, make little account of our speaking well for an hour, in comparison of our living well for a week*. Our example, therefore, is the evidence of our sincerity, and the main support of our sermons. In vain do we teach others the duties of religion, if we neglect them ourselves. When our practice contradicts our precepts, we hinder the salvation of our own souls, and prove a snare to the souls of our people. We cannot, indeed, with any grace, reprove in *them* what we tolerate in ourselves: nor urge *them* to practise what we ourselves neglect. If we should, our labour would be lost; for who would observe the precepts which the preacher disregards, or believe the doctrines which his own life seems to discredit?

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* ——————— "The voice
"Is but an instrument, on which the priest
"May play what tune he pleases. In the deed,
"The unequivocal authentic deed,
"We find sound argument; we read the heart."

COWPER.

Should we, my brethren, keep even free from vice, this, for us, would be but little praise. We should be patterns of the strictest holiness and virtue. We should keep at such a distance, if posible from breaking the law, that, as the rabbies speak, "we "should not touch even the hedge that guards it." We should, with the severest jealousy, watch over every part of our conduct; and, with the most scrupulous punctuality, practise every atom of duty. We should *abstain* not only *from evil*, but from the very *appearance* of it; and sometimes deny ourselves that liberty, which conscience, perhaps, allows, if the indulgence would offend a weak brother, and obstruct our usefulness. We should even exceed the highest measure of holiness which we propose to our people, or which we wish them to possess: For, whatever we are, they will think they may safely fall short of it by many degrees; so exalted are the notions which are generally formed of ministerial sanctity.

A good example is so essential to the priesthood, that every religion, false or true, supposes and requires it. "He who exhorts men to repentance," says the Sadder, or sacred book of the Magi, "should "be without sin. He should be zealous, and his "zeal candid and void of deceit. He should be of "a kind temper, with a soul susceptible of friend-"ship, and his heart and his tongue should always "agree. He is to keep himself from all debauch-"ery, from all injustice, and from all sin of any "kind. He should be a pattern of goodness and "justice to the people of God." In the Greek and Roman religions, in like manner, the last and great injunction given to all who were initiated into the sacred mysteries, was, "Watch and abstain from "evil."

A good example is of so much consequence, that the emperor Julian thought he could make the false

religion prevail over the true, if he could only bring the pagan priests to be holy and exemplary in their conduct. Accounting, as he declares, the strictness and sanctity, professed by christians, to be a principal cause of the prevalence of their faith, he gives directions, "that the heathen priests be men of serious "tempers and deportments; that they neither utter, "nor hear, nor read, nor think of any thing licen- "tious or indecent; that they banish from them all "jests and libertine conversation; be neither expen- "sive nor showish in their apparel; go to no enter- "tainment, but such as are made by the worthiest "persons; frequent no taverns; appear but seldom "in places of concourse; never be seen at the pub "lic games or shows; and take care that their wives, "children, and servants, be pious, as well as them- "selves."—"The exercise of their sacred functions "(says he) requires an immaculate purity, both of "mind and body; and even when they return from "the temple to any occupation or intercourse of "common life, it is incumbent on them to excel, "in decency and virtue, the rest of mankind. Their "humility should appear in the plainness of their "domestic garb; their dignity in the pomp of holy "vestments. A priest of the gods should never be "seen in theatres or taverns. His conversation should "be holy, his diet temperate, his friends of honour- "able reputation, and his studies should be suited to "the sanctity of his profession*."

These are the means by which Julian hoped to make his favourite religion prosper; and it is certain that no religion whatever can prosper without them. For a good example is so nearly allied to the power of persuasion, that it is a miracle of grace if one soul is saved under a wicked minister. A wicked minis-

* See Julian's Epist. passim;—Archbishop Secker's Second Charge;—and Gibbon's Hist.

ter is a curse to his flock, and more fatal than famine, pestilence, or sword, or any other calamity with which God, in his wrath, visits mankind. On the other hand, a faithful and holy minister, who, like the star of Bethlehem, not only lights, but leads his people to Jesus, is one of the greatest blessings which God bestows on men. Such a minister, personating and resembling the great Saviour of souls, carries on the work of redemption as a *fellow-worker* with Christ, and becomes the instrument of completing his designs of mercy, and purposes of love, to the souls of which he has the charge. Such a one is, in some measure, here below, the shepherd and the saviour of his people; and, when the great SHEPHERD shall appear, and ask of him an account of his charge, he can with joy come before him, with the souls which he has been the instrument of saving, and say, *Behold me, and the children which God hath given me.*

A good minister, I repeat it, is *a fellow-worker* with God in the salvation of souls. But a minister, unworthy of this august name, has an equal right to be called a fellow-worker with Satan in destroying mankind. And here, my brethren, I speak not of ministers given to gross vice, or great enormity, if such there be. The character of these, were they guilty but of one glaring trespass against the laws of truth, temperance, or chastity, is confessedly blasted. I speak only of those who are cold or lukewarm, indolent or earthly; of those who are given to levity in behaviour, talk, or appearance; of those who are at no pains to call forth the spirit of their office, by study, prayer, meditation, and self-denial; of those, who make a fashion of going through the duties of their function, without zeal, earnestness, or unction*, and therefore without success; of those, who

* "Gravity and warmth united, form that character of "preaching, which the French call *onction*; the affecting, pen-

deliver the most awful truths of the gospel with the same coldness and insensibility with which they would speak of ordinary matters, and whose lives want that character of piety, which only could stamp a value on their sermons: For sermons have no effect when the preacher has no piety. His words, like arrows shot from a bow which has no elasticity, fall short of the mark, ineffectual and feeble. The coldness of his heart freezes, as it were, his language; and he cannot possibly kindle in the hearts of others that love to God, and zeal for his service of which there is not a spark in his own. If his sermons awaken any remorse in his hearers, his example will immediately allay it and give them a peace which conscience would not allow them. When they see their morals so much resemble those of their minister, they will suppose themselves in no danger; or perhaps believe that there is nothing serious in those duties of religion which it's ministers themselves neglect or despise. Thus, perhaps, thousands of unhappy souls who have gone before us, and who are now in the place of torment, eternally shut out from happiness and from hope, owe their ruin to those ministers under whom they lived. And perhaps, (I utter it with trembling!) perhaps some of the souls under our ministry may find themselves there by and bye, and owe their ruin to the like bad and careless example received from us. That stream which deluges the people of God, may proceed sometimes from the bottom of the sanctuary. That flood of profaneness which overflows the land, may *spring* sometimes *from it's prophets**. Yes my brethren, the fate of thou-

"etrating, interesting manner, flowing from a strong sensibi-
"lity of heart in the preacher to the importance of those
"truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they
"may make a full impression on the hearts of his hearers."

DR. BLAIR'S LECT. ON RHET.

* Jer. xxiii. 15.

sands of souls is annexed to ours. We are always *set for the rise or fall of many in Israel.* We are, as it were, pillars in the house of our God, and if these at any time fail, the superstructure must fall of course.

A good and holy example is the first duty of a pastor. Without this, his labour, in every other respect, is lost. Like those on whom Moses pronounces a part of his curse *, *he sows, but shall not reap: he waters without seeing the increase.* He may carry much seed out into the field, but he shall gather little in. He may plant vineyards, and dress them, but he shall neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes. The sacred field under his care is cursed with bearing only thorns and briers. Unhappy the people to whom God, in his wrath, gives such a pastor! They can neither be roused by his sermons, guided by his example, nor edified by his conversation. Unhappy the pastor, who becomes thus the tempter and destroyer of those souls whom he ought to be instrumental in saving! His superior knowledge, when he does not live according to it, will only serve to aggravate his condemnation. He bears the torch, and yet he himself loses the way. He is *raised in the temple of God* (but like the man of sin spoken of by the apostle), instead of serving him, he *wars against him.* And then how is the name of God blasphemed! how is religion reproached, and Jesus *wounded in the house of his friends!*

Our saviour tells us, that whosoever shall *offend* even *one* of the least of his followers, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. How impossible is it, then, for that minister of the gospel to escape the heaviest condemnation, whose careless or faulty example must *offend*, perhaps ruin, *many?* Even that which in others might be pardon-

* Deut. xxviii, 38, 39.

able, is in him highly aggravated. Others might plead that they did not hear the trumpet; but it was his business to sound it *; and, therefore, if tempted, or even surprised into sin, he can neither excuse the fault, nor, without speedy repentance, dare he hope to elude the punishment. And, heavens! who can conceive what that punishment must be, when the offence is so very heinous? Who can describe that *sorer punishment* of which he may be thought worthy, who, *teaching others, teacheth not himself, but, through breaking the law, dishonoureth God!*

In the Levitical law †, it is required, that the sacrifice for the sin of a priest should be no less than was offered for the whole congregation, who, at that time, may have been two millions of souls in number. And who knows but God may exact for the sin of a priest, (as this seems but too plainly to intimate) a punishment, as he did a sacrifice, equal to what may be inflicted on a whole congregation? One dares not think that any less may be implied in the law just now referred to. How holy, how exemplary, then, should be the life of a minister of the gospel! On every thing he says or does, should be inscribed, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. "His soul "should be purer than the rays of the sun ‡," and he should walk among men as an angel of heaven.

The very heathens, poor and low as their notions of God and religion were, had (as we hinted already) so high an idea of the sanctity of their priesthood, that the strictest and most exemplary regularity was expected from their sacred order. And such persons as assumed the priestly character, knowing that from them a more than ordinary degree of virtue was expected and required, did, from that moment, consider themselves as bound to excel the rest

* Ezek. xxxiii. 3.

† Lev. ix. 3. 14.

‡ Chryfost. de Sacerd.

of mankind. The speech, which an ancient tragic poet puts in the mouth of one of them, may give the blush to many a minister of the gospel of Jesus. "Since I became a priest of Idean Jupiter (says he) "I have kept all my garments pure and spotless, "and I hold myself above the ordinary converse "and conduct of mortal men*."

If such, my brethren, were the sentiments of a priest of Idean Jove, what should be those of the minister of the great JEHOVAH! How pure, how holy, how exalted, almost to a proximity with the perfect angels! And as we, my brethren, bear this character, how cautiously should we guard against even *the appearance of evil*, and especially against every real fault? The sins of wicked men call for the vengeance of heaven, but those of a wicked minister, like that of the murderer of Cain, for a vengeance sevenfold.—And, by wicked ministers (I must again repeat it), I mean not such as the world generally calls by that name: I mean only such as are cold, or careless, or lukewarm, or worldly; who, if they have no positive vice or crime, have as little zeal or piety; who, if they do not love pleasure, do as little love heavenly conversation, prayer, meditation, and study†.—Yes, my brethren, in a minaster, not to be pious, is to be wicked; not to excite to virtue, is to encourage vice; not to confirm, by his example, the doctrine which he preaches, is to deny the faith; and, in a word, not to be more holy than other men, is to be the curse of his people, the disgrace of his office, and the enemy of his God. Their having neglected to do good, more than their having done evil, may be, one day, the condemnation of most ministers. The idle servant is, by the gospel, sentenced to the same torments

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* Εξ ὁ Διος Ιδαιᾳ μυςης
Εγενομᾳ, παντευκα γεμαται,
Φευγω γενεσιν δε βεωτῶν.
PORPHYR. CIT. EX EURIP.

† Vid. Massilon, passim.

with the unfaithful.—And if even the bare absence of zeal and piety be thus punished in a minister, what treasures of wrath must await the unhappy servant who is positively evil! Our saviour himself seems to be at a loss for language strong enough to express the terrible fate of such a minister. *His master*, says he, *will*—what will he?—reprove, or beat, or scourge him?—no, but *cut him asunder!*

Remember the history of the sons of Eli: From that, it would appear, that God has scarce any punishment adequate to the crimes of ministers. And if he thus punished the profaners of the blood of bulls and goats, what shall he do, or rather, what shall he not do, to the profaners of the blood of his Son?

In scripture, we find careless and corrupt pastors the greatest curse which God at any time sent upon a sinful people*. The lesser crimes of the Jews are punished with raising up kings against kings, and nation against nation; with reversing the order of the seasons; with barrenness of land, famine, pestilence, and sword. But when their crimes were at the highest, and God's wrath at the hottest; when weary, as it were, with chastening them, he asks, *why* should ye be stricken any more, or *wherewith* shall I strike you any more†? what last mark shall I give of my displeasure? Then, as we find from the sequel, he draws forth from his stores of wrath unfaithful ministers, wicked and corrupt pastors, *shepherds who fed themselves and not the flock; who did not strengthen the diseased, nor heal the sick, nor bind that which was broken; who did not seek the lost, nor bring again that which was driven away*‡.—And if there be any of us, my brethren, to whom this character will apply, such may fear, that they are sent by God, as

* Massilon. † Isaiah i. 5.

‡ Ezek. xxxiv. and Zech. xi. 16.

one of the first plagues, for one of the worst ages of the world. For, in the New as well as in the Old Testament, false, corrupt, and covetous teachers, are some of the plagues and signs of the worst and last times*. And, indeed, what worse calamity can befal a people, than to have a careless, not to say a corrupt, minister? Other plagues extend only to the body, but this takes in, not only the body, but the soul. Other calamities are limited by time, but the consequence of this extends to eternity; for careless and wicked ministers are seldom or never honoured to be the instruments of saving souls. Like the scribes and pharisees of old, they *neither go into heaven themselves, nor suffer them that are entering to go in.* They are a stone of stumbling and offence in the threshold, on which thousands of unhappy souls must fall and perish. Unhappy that people! and woe to that pastor! although some of his people, by the uncommon grace of God, should be saved.

You see then, my brethren, *what manner of persons we ought to be;* how holy in life and conversation. On this our usefulness here, and our happiness hereafter, our own souls, and those of others, are depending. Let us, therefore, take heed to ourselves, and walk in the steps of our Master. Let our lives be such a copy of his, that men may say of each of us, "He is a fair, though faint image of his Master; "from this man's life I can conceive how Jesus liv-"ed."—As our Master was holy, harmless, and undefiled, so should we, as far as our imperfect nature will allow. To this attainment let us bend our chief attention; for whether we regard our own salvation, or the success of our ministry, this demands our first care. Let us remember, that the chief glory and happiness of every creature depends on the measure he attains of moral excellence; as, indeed, the chief

* 2 Pet. ii. 10. 2. Tim. iii. 2. &c.

glory and perfect blessedness of God himself, must arise from his possessing this excellence in infinite perfection. It is this that peculiarly challenges the love, esteem, and confidence of his rational offspring: and our love, esteem, and usefulness among our people, will be in proportion to the measure we possess of the same excellence. This, in a word, is the basis of all our present and future happiness.—And to excite us to this holiness of life, and excellence of character, we must look, not to the world around us, but to God, to angels, and the other inhabitants of heaven. We must look to the highest precepts of the gospel, and copy the life of our High Priest and pattern. We must think how the apostles, and other faithful preachers, lived; and how departed ministers would live again, if they were to act their part in life a second time. We must study, seek, and practise all possible ways of *doing*, and of *being* good; devote our life to the faithful discharge of our office, and to the practice of self-denial and humility, of charity and devotion.—*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things, and do them.* Be, as you ought, the example of your flocks, and the guides of your people. For you are the light of the world, and if you burn but dimly, the people may wander and be lost. If the pharos will not shine, how can the voyagers find the harbour?

## LECTURE X.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should be Meek and Lowly.*

*LEARN of me*, said our Saviour, *for I am meek and lowly.*—Of all the graces which he, who was perfection itself, possessed, meekness and lowliness are those for which he proposes himself more peculiarly as the examplar and pattern of his followers. Nothing could give us a higher idea of the great excellency and importance of the christian graces, and of their indispensible necessity to all his disciples, at all times, and in all conditions. But most of all are they necessary to ministers of the gospel, who should be altogether mortified to passion and to pride. For we, my brethren, not only live like ordinary christians, in a world of trouble and temptation, and, like them, have frequent occasion to converse with men of corrupt natures and perverse dispositions, but our duty calls us, moreover, to the difficult task of reproving and reforming them. And, in doing this, however cautious and prudent our conduct, we must often lay our account with censure and reproach, with provocation and opposition. It avails not that we love and serve their souls; they will, notwithstanding, be disposed to abuse and hurt us. It avails not that we study and pray for them as dear children; this is the return which we must often look for. And this we must bear with all patience and meekness, as the physician bears the injuries and insults of a patient who is disordered in his judgment*.

* Sicut medicus non a cura insani desistit etsi, &c. sic concionator, &c.—Chrysost.

Yes, my brethren, we have to do with sinners, and must not expect to gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles. *Offences must come:* and, when they do come, it is our business to look to him who endureth the contradiction of sinners against himself, and to learn, from his example, to meet every provocation in the spirit of meekness. It is our business to be slow to wrath, unwilling to resent, patient to bear, and ready to forgive all affronts and injuries whatever. *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.* He must *cease from anger*, and *forsake wrath*, and *fret not himself in any wise.* If he does, he gives the adversary a dreadful advantage over him, and will soon find, that losing his temper is losing the victory.

On the other hand, if he is possessed of meekness, and can, under every provocation, maintain a calm and placid temper, which will never allow passion to prevent the exercise of benevolence, he may, in time, subdue the most stubborn malice of his foes, as well as secure the general approbation and regard of others. And should he not even be free from faults, this temper will go far to hide them. For meekness, like charity, will serve to cover a multitude of sins, from which we turn away our eye to view the better side of the character. Thus, in the following instance of the meekness of the son of Ali, we forget all his faults; we almost forget he is an infidel; when, in the moment of provocation, we see him hold, in a harmless hand, the bloody scimitar of Mahomet. One of his slaves had carelessly allowed a dish of scalding broth to drop on him. The wretch fell prostrate to deprecate his punishment, and repeated a verse from the Koran: "Paradise is for those who "command their anger." "I am not angry." "And for those who pardon offences." "I pardon "your offence." "And for those who return good

" for evil." " I give you your liberty, and a thou-
" sand pieces of silver."

But though a minister should thus make every sacrifice to meekness and the love of peace which conscience will allow, yet, sometimes, while men have vicious passions and inclinations to be thwarted, his duty may call upon him to contend. If, even then, however, he fights with other weapons than those of his own warfare, he acts no less contrary to prudence than to duty. Therefore the archangel Michael, when contending with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation. And, indeed, if he had, could not with such weapons, expect to overcome him. At any rate, what good man or angel would choose to contend for such a victory? Let us rather contend, my brethren, who shall always maintain the meekest frame of spirit: And let us remember, that we can never be happy in ourselves, nor useful to our people, that we can never discharge our duty with fidelity, bear our trials with patience, nor overcome them with fortitude, unless we are possessed of meekness. Without this, especially, we can no more receive the influences of the Divine Spirit, than the lake can receive and reflect the beams of the sun when it is not serene and peaceful.

A meek and lowly temper is so essential a part of our character, and so necessary a qualification for our office, that he who is not in a very high degree possessed of it, should have neither lot nor part in this matter. Hence one of the greatest ornaments of the ministry, St. Chrysostom, would have excused himself from entering on it, because he apprehended he had not that meekness and gentleness of mind which he thought necessary to prepare him for receiving injuries, bearing insults, and treating even his enemies with mildness and love, as Christ had enjoined his followers. And yet how great a share of this virtue, as well as resignation to God, he pos-

sessed, appears from the account which he gives of himself when he was unjustly banished, and uncertain what punishment and misery might still await him.—"When I was banished from the city," says he, "and knew not what should be done to me, none "of these things moved me; but I said within my-"self, If the queen will, let her banish me, the earth "is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If she will, "let her saw me asunder; Isaiah suffered the same "fate. If she will, let her cast me into the sea; I "will remember Jonah. If she will, let her cast me "into a burning fiery furnace, or among wild beasts; "the three children and Daniel were so dealt with. "If she will, let her stone me, or behead me; I shall "then have St. Stephen or the Baptist for my blessed "companion. Or, if she will only deprive me of "all my substance, let her take it; naked came I "out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I re-"turn thither*."

When such a spirit deemed himself not meek enough for the sacred office, we may consider what a high degree of meekness that office requires. Whoever, therefore, is not possessed of much of this heavenly grace, and studious of more, ought not to enter on an office in which he is sure to meet with a thousand trials of temper, from which he might be exempt in any other line. In this office, a man of a peevish, hasty, and resentful spirit, is, like a flame that plays among combustibles, in danger every moment of breaking out and doing harm. He harms himself, others, and the cause of God. And, as a little smoke will darken the brightest object, so, if all the rest of a minister's life were clearer than the light of the sun, this alone would darken all, and make the rest be forgotten. The same allowances are in no case made for us as for other men. The Levites

* Joannes exul, Cyriaco Episc. exuli Epist.

were not allowed to mourn for their dead relations; to teach us how far we ought to rise above all the concerns of flesh and blood, and subdue the most excusable passions of human nature. But how much more ought we to rise above those that are faulty and hurtful? Our minds should be like those upper regions, which are always serene and peaceful. They who take most latitude themselves, expect this from us; as if we were a higher order of beings, which, in some sense, indeed, we ought to be, considering how high our character is, and how sublime our hope.

Yes, my brethren, all things considered, it is absolutely necessary that we should be able to possess our souls in patience, amid the tumult and the storm that rage around us; covering ourselves, as in a coat of mail, with *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.* This only can render us invulnerable to the injuries and contradiction of sinners. Whereas, without it, the darts shot by the feeblest hands will wound us, and serve to embitter, by their numbers, all the hours of our life. Nor shall that life be long which is thus exposed to every flying shaft, and ruffled by every furious blast of a hasty spirit. To any man, the evil of such a spirit is dreadful. It will shake the constitution, waste the flesh, sour the temper, poison the spirits, bring on diseases, and hasten death.—But, to a minister, the evil is still greater. It will hurt his usefulness, degrade the sacred character, do harm to the souls of men, and prejudice the cause of God. For our own sake, therefore, for the sake of our order, and for the sake of our Master, we ought to cultivate, as we are required, a meek and lowly temper, and never be overcome with evil, but *overcome evil with good.* We ought to leave all anger, malice and revenge, to the children of this world; and depart, on no pretence whatever, from the temper which becomes our character and office.—"You

"require of me," said a vestal or priestess of Athens to the magistrates of that city, "you require of me "to curse Alcibiades; but I must tell you, that this "is inconsistent with my office, which allows me "only to bless and pray."

As our temper, my brethren, ought not to be ruffled by any injuries or affronts offered to ourselves, so neither ought we to be transported into passion, or show any rancour, on account of what we may suppose an indignity offered to God. To avenge his cause by our lawless passions, would be to become partakers of other men's sins. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual.* If the heresies and errors of men lead them to disturb the peace of society, it is the business of the civil magistrate to controul them. And if they should not, "it is bet- "ter (as the emperor Antonius observed) that the "gods themselves should punish them, than that we "should interfere, and do it." If God is offended, he needs not the aid of our sinful passions to revenge the wrong; and the rash proffer would only incur his displeasure. When Peter drew the sword, he was checked; when the two disciples offered to call for fire from heaven, they were sharply reproved; and when Abraham (if I may be allowed to allude to a beautiful moral tale) turned the hoary sinner out of his house, the father of the faithful was rebuked, for not bearing, for one night, with him whom God had endured for nine score and eighteen years *.

* "And it came to pass, after these things, that Abraham "sat in the door of his tent about the going down of the sun. "And behold a man, bent with age, coming from the way "of the wilderness, leaning on a staff. And Abraham arose "and met him, and said unto him, Turn in, I pray thee, and "wash thy feet, and tarry all night, and thou shalt arise ear- "ly in the morning, and go on thy way. And the man said,

In recommending this temper, I cannot help remarking a beautiful example of it in the exalted character of Father Paul, author of the History of the Council of Trent. Though this man passed a long life in religious controversy, which, from the apprehended importance of the subject, is, of all controversies, the most exasperating, and though his life and reputation were perpetually attacked by every art that the bitterest enmity could invent, yet his writings, his life, and his heart, were perfectly free from every tint of a vindictive spirit. Entirely devoted to the public cause, and to truth, he rose superior to the spirit of the times, overlooked injuries, insults, and repeated attempts on his life, like a true disciple of the Master whom he served.

In like manner, my brethren, if we would render acceptable service to God, it must be by adorning our

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"Nay, for I will abide under this tree. But Abraham pressed him greatly; so he turned, and they went into the tent "And Abraham baked unleavened bread, and they did eat, "And when Abraham saw that the man blessed not God, he "said unto him, Wherefore dost thou not worship the most "high God, creator of heaven and earth? And the man answered and said, I do not worship thy God, neither do I "call upon his name; for I have made to myself a God, "which abideth always in mine house, and provideth me "with all things. And Abraham's zeal was kindled against "the man, and arose, and fell upon him, and drove him forth "with blows into the wilderness. And God called unto A-"braham, saying where is the stranger? And Abraham answered and said, Lord, he would not worship thee, neither "would he call upon thy name; therefore have I driven him "out from before my face into the wilderness. And God "said, Have I not borne with him these hundred ninety and "eight years, and nourished him, and clothed him, notwithstanding his rebellion against me; and could not thou, "who art thyself a sinner, bear with him one night?"

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profession with patience, forbearance, charity, and meekness. If, at any time, we discover a spirit of persecution, we, at the same time, discover that we have none of the spirit of Jesus, and that we have really as little pretension to wisdom as to innocence; for persecution, instead of crushing, strengthens heresy; whereas, clemency always recommends the person or the cause that shews it. Seven thousand Persians were once taken captive by the Romans, and, according to the customs of a barbarous age, had no alternative but slavery or death. Acacius, bishop of Amida, boldly declaring "that vases of gold and "silver are useless to a God who neither eats nor "drinks," sold the plate of his church, and employed the price in the redemption of the seven thousand captives. He dressed their wounds with affectionate care, supplied their wants, blessed and dismissed them. Go, said he, tell your king, that this is the true spirit of that religion which he persecutes* The consequence was a very long truce, to which we may suppose the clemency of Acacius contributed no less than the arms of the Romans.

Thus, my brethren, if we wish to overcome our own enemy, or him whom we deem an enemy to God, by clemency and meekness only may we hope to effect our purpose. If we cannot succeed by these means, all that remains is, for our own safety, to refrain from their company and their communion. For, say that any one offends, yet where is our commission to punish? since, happily for all, our Master hath reserved vengeance solely to himself, as his peculiar prerogative. Say that our fellow-creatures sin, should not we then remember our own transgressions, and learn to intercede with God for the pardon of theirs? Or, say that they err, should we not learn, from our own ignorance, to pity, and, in the spirit of meekness, to teach them the better way?

* See Gibbon's Hist.

What though they differ from us in their opinions, yet still they may be good and well-intentioned men. And since there are in heaven many mansions, if we are afraid we should not live happily together, let us allow (as we may be sure God will allow) some of them to the virtuous of every persuasion. In the important affair of salvation, we are sure that none would willingly be in a mistake; and if the error of a brother be involuntary and invincible, he may be pitied, but cannot surely be blamed. We ourselves, too, may be in the wrong, at least in part, and see many truths but *through a glass darkly*. Meekness, therefore, and mutual toleration, should make an essential part of our character, as ministers of mercy, and disciples of Jesus; and this would prove the strongest recommendation of ourselves and of our religion.

Three pilgrims, a Jew, a Christian, and a Mussulman, set out from Cairo, with a caravan, in order to cross the desart to Salem. For the first part of the journey they moved with the multitude, as a drop in the stream, almost without thinking whither they were going. But reflecting, at length, that they must perish if they missed the way, they began to cast an anxious look before them, and to explore the paths of the desart. In my opinion, said the Jew, we need not long hesitate about our route: Yonder, to the right, is the pillar set up by Moses, who, as every body knows, conducted thousands in safety through this wilderness; and our wisest course is to follow this land-mark, which he has set up to direct us.—It is true, said the Mussulman, Moses got safely through this wilderness, but it was by a route which his firmest adherents must own to be extremely difficult. For my own part, I prefer, by much, the path that was trod by the prophet of Mecca: it is distinctly marked by that pillar to the left, which has ever directed the steps of the faithful.—I am sor-

ry to see both of you mistaken, said the Christian, the one recommending a road so tedious as to be now almost obsolete, and the other preferring a road in which there are so many pits and precipices, and in which the sabre has been so busy, that the steps are slippery with the blood of the murdered. The straight and only safe, as well as pleasant, road, is that which has been marked by Jesus, where yonder midmost pillar rears it's head on high, and meets at a distance the eye of the pilgrim. Don't you perceive, right over it, the distant towers of Salem ?—I perceive them over the pillar on the right, said the Jew.—And I swear they are in a line with that on the left, said the Mussulman.—They disputed, they grew warm, they quarrelled ; each imagining that he could compel, by force, those whom he could not convince by reason.

In this situation, they were overtaken by a venerable dervise, who, learning the cause of their difference, thus addressed them : " Children, you are not " wise. Had you changed your places, your views, " had also changed ; and, having seen the cause of " your misunderstanding, you had all been reconci- " led. Besides, the city of Salem is so great, that " a part of it, like the horizon, may be seen over " each of the pillars ; and it is possible that thou- " sands, who took the direct line by each, have " found their way. For my own part, I have known " many well meaning people who, having no oppor- " tunity of knowing any of these roads, took a dif- " ferent course from all, and I am far from doubt- " ing of their safety ; for that depends not only on " the way, but, in some measure, on the prudence " and care of the pilgrim. It is impossible, howe- " ver, that all these roads should be equally safe and " commodious, or that it should be a matter of in- " difference which of them is chosen. I have been " considering them long, and comparing the differ-

" ent accounts and charts of them, as every man
" ought in a matter of such infinite moment. For
" I hold no man is at liberty to take what way he
" pleases, and hazard his life, without weighing the
" evidence in favour of each, and using his reason
" to enable him to make the wisest choice. I have
" done so with care, and my observations I give you.
" The road by the pillar to the right was once the
" best and safest in the world, but it has been for a
" long time neglected, and is now much out of re-
" pair. That by the left was at first extremely foul,
" nor is it yet such as could be wished: it has, how-
" ever, some things to recommend it. Five times a
" day the travellers are admonished by public criers,
" to pray for the guidance of heaven; and all give
" such punctual obedience, that they seem to emu-
" late each other in piety. On this road, too, there
" is much accommodation for the weak and needy.
" I dare not therefore reprobate, though I pity, all
" who choose it; it is because they know no better
" path.—But the way by the midmost pillar is, in
" every respect, the straightest, the safest, and the
" most pleasant. On this road, at almost every step,
" palm-trees shade, and fountains refresh the pilgrim:
" And did they who enter upon it follow the direc-
" tions inscribed upon the pillar and the chart with
" which they are furnished, every other path would
" soon be forsaken. But, instead of this, multitudes
" turn aside into bye-paths on the right and on the
" left, and, for some trifles which attract their notice,
" forget to proceed on their journey. Even they
" who remain on the road too often spend their
" time in quarrels and contentions, almost equally
" fatal; some alleging that all ought to walk on
" this side of the road, while others contend they
" ought to walk on that; some searching for the
" track of this, and others of that predecessor, and
" each alleging it is death to tread any other part

" of that fair and beautiful road which is open be-
" fore them. By these unhappy means, the im-
" mense crowd which enters it, is perpetually thin-
" ned as it proceeds; and but the few, who study
" only to be on the road, and to advance in it, reach
" the end of the journey. This, you may perceive,
" is the way which I myself intend to pursue; and
" I intend to do it with all my might, keeping my
" eye upon the chart, without searching for the track
" of Peter, of Martin, or of John. If you can think
" as I do, and come with me, it will give me plea-
" sure; if not, we shall part in peace, for why
" should we quarrel, or contend with any weapons
" but those of reason? And, indeed, when in our
" education, reading, habits of life, company and
" constitution, there must be so much difference,
" how can it be expected that our opinions should
" entirely be the same? God knows our frame, and
" knows that if any one of us had been in the
" place and circumstances of the other, he must,
" perhaps, have had his opinions too. He knows that
" we all wish to take the course which is safest to
" ourselves, and, of course, most pleasing to him,
" since none of us, I trust, would wilfully and know-
" ingly run the hazard of perishing in the desart.—
" Judge, therefore, my brethren, of each other's
" conduct with candour. Let each be persuaded, in
" his own mind, that he does what is best, and,
" whatever road he takes, (after carefully examining
" and comparing them) keep bent on getting forward
" to the end of his journey. Then we may possibly
" arrive, all of us in due time, where we wish; and
" talk of the difference of the roads when we meet at
" Salem."

Struck with the meekness of his temper, and the moderation of his sentiments, all the three blushed for having quarrelled, and, by the way of the mid-most pillar, unanimously followed the dervise.

## LECTURE XI.

### *The same Subject continued.—Meekness and Lowliness of Mind.*

THE calm, meek, and dispassionate frame of mind, which I have been urging, is so essential to our character, my brethren, that I cannot help recommending it further, by calling your attention to rest on the vast benefits that attend it. Sufficient, indeed, are these to recommend it to the warmest regard of every attentive mind. Possessed of meekness, the arrogance and pride of men cannot hurt us; their perverse and peevish humours, and all the fruits of a bitter spirit, cannot harm us. Possessed of meekness, we secure the favour of the good, we conquer the malice of the bad, we bear the infirmities of the weak, and with all long-suffering teach the ignorant. Possessed of meekness, whatever be the provocation, we keep the quiet enjoyment of ourselves, and suppress every thought that has a tendency to awaken our angry passions. In a word, possessed of this grace, we derive most pleasure from all the enjoyments of life, and feel least pain from all it's evils; and, after having thus *inherited the earth*, we have a principal qualification for being members of that glorious and blessed society above, of which Jesus, the great pattern of meekness, is the head and master.

Meekness is further of excellent use in regulating our deportment towards God, as well as man; as it enables us to acquiesce, and even to rejoice, in all the dispensations of heaven, and to maintain a calm,

contented, and thankful frame of soul, under every visitation of providence, and in every commotion of nature. Thus, under the severest trials, Aaron *held his peace*, Eli *bowed his head*, and the Shunamite said, *It is well*. And thus, too, in circumstances of terror and alarm, other meek and holy men have always stood undaunted. As the hermit Oran sat one day at the door of his cell, over the village of Ara, he perceived the face of the heavens assume a terrible form, and looked up with a smile, in hopes of seeing the signs which are to precede the final judgment. The rains descended, the winds arose, the lightnings played, the thunder roared, and the earthquake shook all the hills about him. The inhabitants of the village, apprehending the dissolution of nature, flocked around the holy man, in hopes of deriving security from his prayers, or consolation from his presence and from his counsel. They saw with astonishment the serenity of his countenance, and stood about him in silence, while he thus calmly addressed them: "Terrible to me, as to you, would "have been this rage of the elements, if my peace "were not made with him who rules them. But "my soul is conformed to his, and waits his will in "the spirit of meekness. Go ye, my friends, and "learn the same frame of mind, and then you will "rather confide in the goodness, than dread the "power, of your Maker. For, infinite as thy pow-"er is, O my God, so is also thy goodness; and the "meek may look for thy mercy."

Such, my brethren, is the necessity and benefit of meekness; and equally needful is that *lowliness* of mind which our Saviour recommends along with it. It is the true foundation of all union and intercourse between God and the soul of man. He *dwelleth with the humble and contrite; he giveth grace to the humble.* If the heavens are the habitations of his glory, the humble heart is the habitation of his grace.

Humility, my brethren, is highly becoming the nature of man, still more so the profession of a christian, and most of all the character of a minister of the gospel, whose office frequently leads him to contemplate the holiness of God, and to meditate on his awful perfections. Such views have a natural tendency to fill him with self-abasement, and with a feeling conviction of his own ignorance, guilt, and misery. So, when Isaiah beheld the stupendous glory of God, and saw his train fill the temple, he immediately cried out, "Woe is me, I am struck dumb: "for I am a man of unclean lips, and mine eyes "have seen the King, the Lord God of hosts."

If, from the contemplation of the nature and perfections of God, we turn our eyes upon ourselves, and consider the ignorance and guilt of our souls, or the feebleness and frailty of our bodies, what a humbling view must we have of ourselves! How little do we know of matter or spirit, of God or of his works, of any thing within us or without us, save that our mind is dark, our soul polluted, and our body crushed before the very worm. Or, if we cast our eyes around us, and consider how transient and insignificant, or even accidental, those circumstances are, in which the highest of mankind differ from the lowest, and examine the little influence they generally have on a man's real happiness, we shall soon perceive that there is very little cause, indeed, to be proud or vain of them. In every thing that is truly material, the confirmation of the soul, the fashion of the body, the exigencies of both, all mankind are altogether on a level. And if in any other thing worth the mentioning, they differ, that difference is small, and of short continuance. At their birth and at their death, at least, the subject and the sovereign, the king and the beggar, are equal: and, to immortal, everlasting creatures, any momentary difference that can happen between these two points, is not worth

the minding. That an immortal being, walking in the narrow line which separates heaven from hell, should have his thoughts, for one moment, taken up with any such thing, is so melancholy a consideration, that it might serve of itself to humble the thoughts of any man, and to bring down his haughty looks*.

By such meditations, therefore, let us cultivate humility,—a virtue of the first excellence, and of the most indispensible obligation; the first requisite in the profession of our religion, and the root from which all other graces naturally spring. For, as it implies a sense of our guilt and unworthiness, it leads us to repent and fear God; as it implies a sense of our obligations to him, and our veneration of him, it leads to love, praise and adore him; and as it implies the esteem of others better than ourselves, it leads to the duties of self-government, and to the performance of all relative duties. Nor does it lead to duty only, but also to honour. The man that humbleth himself, his fellow creatures generally, his maker always, delighteth to honour. The spirit of God will dwell with him, angels will visit and attend him, and the great Pattern of humility will patronize and bless him.

*He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*, was, of all our Saviour's maxims, the oftenest repeated, and that which was most strongly inculcated by the significant emblem of a little child, and by the still more expressive figure of his condescending to wash the feet of his disciples. The plainness, innocence, and simplicity of children, is here required of us; and a ready and cheerful condescension to the meanest offices of benevolence to the meanest of our brethren. And with good reason is this humility so strongly enfor-

* See Leechman's Sermons.

ced, considering that no grace has a greater tendency to make us holy, and, of course, happy; as no vice is more subversive of every thing that is good than pride. Should all the showers of heaven alight on the lofty mountain, they rest not there. They hasten from it's barren top to bless the valley with fertility and verdure. What the showers are to the valley, grace is to the lowly soul. It seeks to it, rests upon it, refreshes, beautifies, and makes it fruitful. And, if humility be thus useful and ornamental to ordinary christians, it is much more so to a minister. The very name which he bears (for you know it means *a servant*) implies, that, without this grace he is unworthy of the title.

Yes, my brethren, we are, without this grace, unworthy of the name, and unqualified for the duties of our office. For our business is to lay ourselves out in serving our people in their truest interest, and in furthering the salvation of their souls. And, in doing this, we must have equal regard to all committed to our care; for we stand in the same relation to them all. We should have no hatred but to vice, no prepossession but to virtue. Every other distinction is vain and momentary; and, however dazzling to the children of the world, should be of no account with us, in whose eyes *a vile man*, however rich, should *be contemned*, and a holy man, however poor, should be esteemed and honoured. No other distinction is regarded by our Master, nor will any other hold in the world to which we hasten. The souls of the lowest are as dear to Jesus as those of the highest; for he *regardeth not the rich more than the poor*. To us too, in our ministerial capacity, they ought to be the same. *I charge thee, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels*, says the apostle to Timothy, *that thou observe these things, doing nothing by partiality*. As men, or members of civil society, indeed, it becomes us to give, and to in-

culcate upon others to give, *honour to whom honour*, and *fear to whom fear* is due, according to the subordination of ranks, which in this, and, probably, in all other worlds, must hold. But, as ministers, having the cure of souls, we ought, I say, in our care and regard of those souls, to make no difference on account of outward condition. Riches, rank, and talents, are but the pitiful distinctions of a moment, and of no account in the sight of God, who regards only our measure of holiness and moral excellence. In other respects, all souls are, with him, rated at the same price, and ransomed alike by the precious blood of his dear Son. In our estimation, therefore, they should be held alike dear. When the humblest soul needs counsel or consolation, let him not be afraid to break in upon our study and retirement to ask it.* Let him not be afraid to make known his case to his pastor, nor doubt of finding in him a tender and sympathising friend; one who will take a fatherly concern in all his joys and sorrows, and to whom he may safely unbosom the most secret thoughts of his soul. Let him be encouraged to come, in every time and place, and his visits held always seasonable and acceptable. So Jesus himself received Nicodemus, when he came by night.

Thus, my brethren, let us *neither reject the application of the afflicted, nor turn away our face from a poor man.* Let us lend a tender ear to the doubts and fears of the young and timid convert, and listen again to the same complaint which we have formerly heard from the weak, though perhaps old, believer. If they are unwearied in asking, shall not we be un-

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* Cura ut aditus ad te diurni atque nocturni pateant; nec foribus solum ædium tuarum, sed etiam vultu ac fronte, quæ est animi janua; quæ, si significat voluntatem abditam esse ac retrusam, parvi refert patere ostium. Q. Cicero, *de petit. consil. ad M. Tull. fratrem.*

wearied in showing the road to glory and immortality? Yes, with unceasing ardour and diligence, let us endeavour to recover them, from vice and misery, to holiness and happiness; show them heaven open, and encourage them to make every exertion to get forward. Let us bear patiently with all their ignorance, and all their weakness. To show ourselves sullen or impatient on such occasions, is to *turn that which is lame out of the way*, and to *push the diseased*, which ought rather to be healed. The good pastor, like the great shepherd, will be patient, meek, and lowly, towards all; but will be peculiarly tender of the young and weak. *He will carry the lambs in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.*

We see, then, my brethren, the indispensible necessity of those divine graces which our master calls upon us to learn of him. And of whom else can we learn them to any good purpose? Heathen moralists said little or nothing about them; and even the law given to the Jews, because of the hardness of that people's hearts, allowed but little room to them. But Christ made them the basis of Christian morals, and gave, in himself, the most perfect pattern of them, for the imitation of his followers. For, although Lord of all, he became the servant of all; and, notwithstanding the many provocations which he met with, and the indignities offered him, none of them ever ruffled or discomposed him. *Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth*, yet the perverse people with whom he had to do, *so provoked his spirit, that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.* The same people offered infinitely greater indignities to our Lord, without kindling in him the least angry sentiment. When calumniated as the companion of sinners, how meek his reply! When slandered as a confederate with devils, how calm his reasoning! When treated with rudeness by the Samaritans, how mild his spirit! How

patiently did he endure the contradiction of sinners, the persecution of enemies, and the weakness of friends! Above all, how patiently did he bear the dishonour, and shame, and pain of the cross; enduring at once the agonies of death, and the scorn of sinners, without the shadow of discomposure! *When reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not!* but prayed, and pleaded, even for his crucifiers. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.*—After his blessed example, let us, my brethren, show all long suffering, patience, and meekness. Let us remember what spirit we are of, and what master we profess to follow. Let us show the world our proficiency in the school of the meek and lowly Jesus, that we may, at the great day, be owned by him as his true disciples. And let us always bear in mind, that, whatever may be our other gifts and graces, we have no pretensions to this character without lowliness and meekness. For a proud or passionate man cannot be related to Jesus, nor please God, if, by his ministerial gifts, he should be able to cast out devils. No, he rather offends God, and hurts man: he poisons even the cup of salvation, by mingling with a part of his own ungracious spirit.

## LECTURE XII.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should be a Man of Zeal and Diligence.*

HE who loves God and the souls of men, and who duly values the blessings of the gospel, will feel a necessity laid upon him, and the love of God constraining him, to teach the way of salvation to others. He will, like the prophet of Anathoth, feel a zeal for this in his heart, *as a burning fire shut up in his bones**, which a tender concern for the souls of men, whom he wishes to rescue from endless misery, and to put in the way to everlasting happiness, makes it impossible for him to restrain. He feels his whole soul going forth with irresistible force, impelling him to dedicate his life and his labours to the saving of souls, and to the service of the gospel. Yes, my brethren, to a life of study, piety and prayer, and to all possible care to regulate his conduct and his temper, a faithful minister will join an earnest zeal for saving sinners. This will always be the ruling passion in his breast, of which every consideration of pleasure, ease and interest, will ever yield. Without this, all his talents, be they what they may, would answer no useful end. Without this, even his morals would be irreproachable to little or no purpose. To live a regular and inoffensive life, in the eyes of the world, may be the chief praise of most other men, but it should be the least of ours. For *none of us liveth unto himself.* We must therefore, have our hearts penetrated with the strongest zeal for saving

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* Jer. xx. 9.

the flocks committed to our care, and feel our souls deeply wounded at seeing any of them about to be lost. We must make every exertion, strain every nerve, to rescue them from their fatal bondage, to pluck them as brands out of the burning, to exhort, conjure, reprove and rebuke them, *in season and out of season*; becoming, as far as innocence and duty will allow, *all things to all men*, that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Nothing short of this can give us any chance of success in the great work in which we are engaged, or any chance of being approved by our Lord, on that day on which he will call us to give an account of our stewardship.

If we, my brethren, are satisfied with being only just and regular in our conduct, and think it enough to discountenance vice by our practice, or even gently reprove it by our conversation, *what do we more than others?* In all this, many private christians, without the peculiar engagements, or advantages of our calling, equal, or, perhaps, exceed us. And if we differ from them in nothing but in the discharge of those public duties which our office indispensably requires of us, we greatly betray our trust, and, of consequence, we are not the friends, but the foes of our people. Then we are, in a negative sense at least, the instruments, not of their salvation, but of their eternal ruin. Our false unfeeling virtue is a crime, and our drowsy morals a lethargic disease, fatal to ourselves, dangerous to others, and detestable to God. Careless keepers of the vineyard, we show no watchfulness or zeal to keep the enemy from breaking down it's fences. Unfaithful and untender pastors of the church, which the son of God purchased with his own precious blood, we only look to ourselves, and neither lead our sheep to proper pastures, nor protect them from the lion ready to devour. False servants of the MOST HIGH, we are unconcerned

about promoting his glory or advancing his interest in the world. Careless ambassadors for Christ, we show no zeal in his cause, nor any concern to fill up what is behind of his sufferings, by rendering the shedding of his blood effectual for the salvation of the souls committed to our care. On the contrary, by our silence and insensibility (if these indeed belong to us,) we give our approbation to those who reproach him, and consent to the crime of those who crucified the LORD of glory.

Can we think, my brethren, that God, who will have *his ministers to be flaming fire*, will excuse our inactivity and indolence in the duties of our calling, on account of the regularity of our manners? Has he called us to his vineyard only to stand still and do no harm? Or can we, in the approaching evening, expect the reward of faithful servants, merely for having done no positive mischief? No, my brethren, let us not deceive ourselves, God will not be mocked. He has called us to work, and not to stand idle: and our personal virtue will only aggravate our condemnation, for having deprived our people of the advantage of our zeal, which only could have given weight and usefulness to our virtue. For virtue, lukewarm and without zeal, will only serve to countenance our people in their coldness and indifference. Our example may teach them somewhat of regularity and decency, in which they will easily believe they need not come up to us. Our public ministrations they will consider as matters of form, when they see us have no zeal that corresponds to their real or apparent importance. In a word, they will believe we are far from being in earnest, and that they need be much less so. And thus, for want of zeal, the stream which ought to fertilize the valley, will become a stagnant pool, and taint all around with it's corruption.

Even in an ordinary christian, there cannot be a

surer symtom of destruction than an easy indifferent cast of mind, or a listless indolent disposition. This will more effectually ruin the soul than all the cares of the world, and all the wild schemes of ambition. For, the first benumbs and kills the powers of the soul, while the last preserve it's vigour and activity, and so give it some small chance of taking, perhaps, some time or other, a better direction. And if indolence or want of zeal be so dangerous in an ordinary christian, what must it be in a minister?—A minister without zeal, is dead, however much he may appear to live. Zeal is that principle that should pervade all his life, animate all his labours, sweeten all his toils, and, in a word, be the life and soul of his ministry. Without this, all his services are hateful to God, useless to man, burdensome and uncomfortable to himself. He may sometimes, indeed, draw near to God, but it is with a cold heart and frozen lips, the lifeless carcase, the mere carrion of devotion. God will, therefore, neither accept his person nor hear his prayers. For God *is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* Such a person may likewise, in the dull course of his duty, admonish sinners, in a cold, lifeless, and languid strain but he will admonish them without effect. Such soft whispers will never awaken the sleeping sinner, nor rouse him to a sense of his danger. It is not the yawn of the sluggard that can do this, but the trumpet of the gospel powerfully sounded. The rustling of the leaf can never accomplish that which requires the roar of the thunder.

But you will perhaps excuse yourself, my brother, from this exertion, by alleging it would be to no purpose, on account of the hardness and insensibility of the people. Hard, insensible, and unimpressible by sacred truths, alas! they too often are. But this, instead of damping, should rather increase your ardour, and animate your zeal. For true zeal consid-

ers all opposition but as fuel to augment it's flame. It is like a strong current, whose force increases the more it is straitened and confined. Mark how this sacred passion operated in the prophets and apostles of old. Mark how the zeal of Moses kindled, when all his people bowed to the golden calf; how the zeal of Elijah flamed, when he thought all Israel had forsaken the true God and gone after Baal; and how Paul and Barnabas *waxed bold*, when the Jews spake against them, *contradicting and blaspheming*. And did the other apostles of our Lord, when the stream of opposition rolled against them, put their hands in their bosom, sit still, yield to it's fury, and allow themselves tamely to be borne down by the torrent? If they had, where had been their successes? where their triumphs? If the faithful witnesses of Jesus had not confessed him when others denied him, where had been their crowns; and where our holy religion? But they distinguished themselves on earth, and they are now distinguished in heaven. They *stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes*, and *palms in their hands*, the reward of their fidelity. And shall not we, my brethren, have the sacred ambition of emulating their zeal, and sharing in their glory, especially when this ambition will not expose us to any imminent danger? For we are not called, like them, to *resist unto blood:* We need not be afraid of dying martyrs to the cause of God. The best are still on our side, and the laws of our country spread their wings to protect us. But even to this sanctuary persecution will not drive us. The lash of tongues, it's only engine in our happy land, can only beat the air; one hair of our head it cannot destroy. And, bad as the times are, vice is still ashamed, and piety esteemed, under a zealous and faithful ministry.

Or, suppose the worst, and say that it were not, yet, even in this unhappy case, you ought not to

abate your zeal, or slacken your diligence. If the people under you are so very wicked, you should believe that God, in compassion to their souls, called you forth to check their wickedness, and to awaken them to a sense of their crimes. Your zeal, like that of Moses, on the occasion above alluded to, should be kindled in proportion to the greatness of the crimes of your people, and the multitude which it has to encounter and restrain. Think how Moses, Elijah, or St. Paul, would act in such a situation, and aim thou at being like them. Think how the whole world was corrupted, when the first ministers went forth to reform it, and yet they were not discouraged. They were brought before kings and rulers, synagogues and sanhedrims, yet they were not dismayed. They had trials of cruel mockings, and scourgings, and bonds and imprisonments: and yet their zeal, like fire which one attempts to drown with oil, burned still the brighter the more that fury and reproach were poured upon it. Their zeal was stronger than death, and by no flood of opposition could it be extinguished. And are we called forth to stand in the room of such worthies, and to maintain the conquests which they have won, and shall we betray our trust, desert our post, and like cowards, give up or neglect the cause of God? God, and a regard to our own salvation, forbid it! Sworn, as we solemnly are, to feed the flock of Christ with knowledge, and with truth, and to devote our labours and our lives to the work of the ministry, let us constantly and zealously pursue this as our sole business, that we may not be found, *in that day*, to have perjured our own souls, and to have destroyed those of others.

If our own souls only were in danger, my brethren, and that we could perish alone, our indolence, in that case, would be the less criminal. But when we have taken upon us the care of other souls besides our own, there is no excuse for indolence or

indifference. "Were you to pass a dangerous gulf, "my brother, (said once a friendly admonisher) in "a skiff, in which you were alone, I should be sor- "ry, for your own sake, to see you careless; but I "have nopatience at your being so, when you have "engaged to pilot a vessel laden with the precious "souls of others. Or, if your own life only were "in danger, from some alarming disease, and that "you made light of it; or your own house only on "fire, and that you did not heed it, I should, in that "case, regret your thoughtlessness; but when you "have undertaken to be the physician of an hospital "or town infected with the plague; or to watch and "put out all the fires that should be kindled in a "street or district, there is no bearing, in that case, "with your remissness." No, my brethren, our office involves the fate of thousands in the same danger with ourselves; and their blood will be required at our hands, if, through our negligence, they perish. Let us then act our part with care and zeal, that our own souls may be delivered.

*Necessity*, my brethren, *is laid upon us*, and woe unto us if we act not our part with zeal and diligence. Our business requires and deserves every possible exertion. We are sent to enlighten the world, to save it from the curse of God, to cast down the kingdom of Satan, to advance the kingdom of Christ, and to lead our people, through every difficulty, to the possession of glory. And surely all this needs and deserves our utmost labour and zeal to accomplish. We are sent to feed and to guide the church, which GOD loved, for which CHRIST died, in which the SPIRIT resides, and to which angels minister, and shall we think much of our labour or our lives, if we may but fulfil our ministry?

Do but conceive, my brethren, how we shall wish to have acted our part, when the scene is about to close, and when the angel of death will let us know

that we must deliver up our charge, and be no longer stewards. Do but conceive how departed preachers would acquit themselves, were they to return from eternity, and permitted once more to tread the same stage, and to act a second part in life. Heavens! what examples of fidelity, earnestness, and zeal, should we then behold! Like John the Baptist, who, in a sense, was said to be Elias returned, and who, from his peculiar earnestness in preaching, was characterised by *the voice of one crying*, they would put forth all their soul and spirit in preaching the kingdom of God. But as no second chance of rectifying our conduct is to be allowed, let us now acquit ourselves like men. When a blessed immortality is the prize, and a miserable eternity the punishment, no exertion of zeal can be too great. Let us then do all that we possibly can, to improve the one glorious opportunity which we have of saving ourselves and others; and firmly resolve, in dependance on the divine grace, that, whatever other men shall do, as for us we shall be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

And is it possible, my brethren, that we can serve him in any other manner? Is it possible we can be lukewarm in such a work as that in which we are engaged? What, my brethren, servants of Jesus Christ, sent forth to work his work, enlarge his kingdom, and gather in his elect, can we see the kingdom of the devil prevail over his, in the portion of the vineyard committed to our care, and stand the cool and quiet spectators of the scene? What avails it though conscience reproach not ourselves with any gross personal crime, if we give no check to the crimes of those who are given us in charge? Shall we behold Christ *crucified afresh*, and witness the indignities offered to his person and his name; and shall we not, I will not say, only pray, and sigh, and groan, in the bitterness of our soul in secret; but

shall we not also use in public every authority with which we are entrusted, and every weapon with which love and zeal can arm us? We must otherwise be considered as enemies to our Master, and traitors to his cause; for, if we are *not* heartily *with him*, he will account us to be *against him*. Yes, my brethren, when the glory of God and the interests of the gospel are concerned, a minister ought not, from indolence, or timidity, or false prudence, to be silent. He ought to know no man according to the flesh, but to forget titles, names, honours, and authorities, when those possessed of such distinctions forget themselves and forget their God. *Whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord.*

If a dear friend is abused in our presence, are we not fired with indignation? Do we not say something in his behalf, and take his part against the slanderer of his name? and shall we not have the same zeal in supporting the name and interests of Jesus Christ? Can we hope that he will honour us with the title of *his friends*, if we neglect what so tender a title requires? If even an ordinary christian who does not, on such occasions, *confess him before men*, shall be denied by him before his Father and his angels, how infinitely greater must be the condemnation of that minister, who does not stand up, though alone, for the glory of his Lord; who does not confess him, if all the world should deny him; and who does not value his smiles above his own life, and, in comparison of them, despise alike the favours and the frowns of earth and hell?

I know that there is a time when the best men must be *dumb, and restrain their lips as with a bridle;* a time in which christian prudence will direct them *not to cast their pearls before swine*, lest those unclean animals turn upon them in a rage and rend them. And, to observe the times and the seasons, the place

and the persons, and to restrain our zeal when it would only produce rage or ridicule, yet with such symtoms of concern as may convince both the friends and the enemies of religion how much we feel it, is a matter in which ministerial prudence must direct us. But prudence is one thing, and cowardice another. Our Saviour's caution on this head will never excuse that minister who sacrifices any part of his master's honour, and his own duty, to any human or selfish consideration. The faithful minister will always lean to the safest side; and, if his zeal should at any time carry him a little too far, in the opinion of men, the rectitude of his intention would at the same time plead his excuse in the eye of God. Seldom, however, is there any danger of erring on this hand. So far from it, that in nothing do we oftener fail than in not appearing, in the common intercourse of life, to be sufficiently penetrated with the importance of our office, or sufficiently zealous to promote it's glorious ends. We affect too much to be like other men, and to sail along, rather than stem, the ordinary tide of manners.

Indiscreet zeal, I own, there may be. But thanks to heaven, which pours not down all it's vials of wrath at once, this is none of the evils of the present times. Lukewarmness, a disease of much more fatal and extensive consequence, has long since banished it out of the christian world. But is it possible, my brethren, that a minister of the gospel can be lukewarm, when either the honour of his master, or the salvation of his souls, is in the smallest degree concerned? Being intrusted by the God of heaven with matters of everlasting moment to the souls of men, will he, on any account, at any time, or in any instance, behave in such a manner as to injure the great cause which he is sworn to support and serve? Being a parent, can he see his children perish before his eyes, and feel no kindling of zeal, no bow-

els of compassion? Being a pastor, can he see his sheep throw themselves headlong into perdition, and not warn them zealously and loudly of their danger? If he does not, he has not the heart of a parent, but of a stranger; it is hard as adamant. He is not a true shepherd, he is not a minister of the gospel; but an usurper of the sacred office, and an intruder into the temple of God. And will his false title secure such a one from heaven's merited vengeance? Ah, no! the decree is already gone forth against him, and the execution of it, unless he repent, is not very distant. He shall be bound hand and foot, and have his portion with the hypocrites. Yes, my brethren, if even a common christian, who is lukewarm, is rejected, and cast out, like insipid water, which is *neither hot nor cold*, what shall become of that minister of the Gospel who serves the God of heaven coldly? The case admits of no halting. If God be God, serve him zealously: if Baal be God, serve him as you will. We must either be *hot or cold*, or perish*.

Warm, therefore, is the zeal that should actuate every faithful minister. And for such zeal, my brethren, there is a peculiar call in our day. A spirit of coldness and indifference, in matters of religion, is gone forth into the world. The love of many, the love of most, is waxen cold, and the fire of devotion is fallen so low, that it can scarce warm even those who serve at the altar. And if we are indevout, no wonder if others be prophane. If we are cold or lukewarm in matters of religion, we are not likely to promote it's interests among men. It is only by a warm and earnest desire to win souls, that we can look for any success in the great and glorious work in which we are engaged. It was by earnestness and zeal that our venerable predecessors, who resign-

* Massilon, passim.

ed their place to us, became so mighty in reforming the church and the world. And it may be to the want of these noble qualities in us, I fear, that a great share of the irreligion of the age we live in may be owing. Would to God the consequence reached no farther than the age we live in: But it extends to judgment, it extends to eternity; for *the redemption* of the poor souls which perish through our want of zeal, *ceaseth forever*. And, on that great day on which the chief Shepherd shall appear, and call before him the ministers, the faithful ministers, of former generations, to applaud their zeal and reward their diligence, they will come with their thousands and ten of thousands to produce as the fruit of their labours, when many ministers of our day, it is much to be feared, may stand alone, and without any such crown of rejoicing; or, what is still worse, after having preached the gospel so coldly to others, fall themselves to be cast away. And even the most zealous among us may have cause to be ashamed, when we shall, on that awful day, meet the ministers of all ages, and of all countries, before the tribunal of our common Lord; and when we shall be called forth, in order to give an account of our stewardship, and to show whether or not we delivered to our successors, each his portion of the vineyard, more cultivated and improved than he received it. Then, when we shall hear the martyrs tell how they bled and how they died; when we shall hear the first reformers tell how they fought, and struggled, and conquered, and triumphed; when we shall hear a Patrick, a Ninian, a Columba, a Luther, a Calvin, and a Knox, tell what difficulties their zeal surmounted, and what reformation their diligence effected in a few years, and then see them lean forward, when we are called, to hear what had been done by us in the course of ages; how shall they be astonished and disappointed, and we confounded and ashamed! How shall we

hang down our heads, and wish for a veil to hide us! May heaven avert such cause of shame! And may we live so as to be able then to lift up our heads and rejoice! With this view, let us imitate the zeal of those worthies who are gone before us: Or, rather, let us imitate the zeal of the great Examplar of our ministry. How ardent was his zeal for the glory of God and the souls of men! He continually *went about doing good*. He embraced every opportunity in public, in private, in the ship, in the field, at the table, to discourse of religion, and of the things which pertained to the kingdom of God. As the royal prophet foretold of him, *the zeal of God's house ate him up*. Of this how strong a proof did he give in rebuking the Scribes and Pharisees, notwithstanding their rank and their authority, their malice and their power; and in purging the temple, without any regard to his personal safety, which might be endangered by those who were no doubt enraged when their worldly interest was affected. Consider how entirely he was devoted to the great work for which his Father sent him; how ardent to have it accomplished, frequently preaching all day, and often praying all night! Blessed Lord! thou didst pray that our love might not grow cold; that our faith might not fail; that our zeal might not abate! And shall we defeat the end of those prayers, yea, defeat the end of thy dying, so far as depends on us, by being cold or lukewarm in thy service? Then, *may our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth, and our right hand forget her cunning!* Then, *let our days be few*, that *other* servants more worthy may *take our office!* servants who may walk in the spirit of Elijah; who may walk in the spirit of their master; and who will not count their most painful labours dear, provided they may accomplish the end of their ministry, and be able to gain souls to their Lord.

Such, my dear brethren, is the zeal that should actuate every faithful minister. But as every flower in the garden has it's semblance among the degenerate tribes of the field, so this sacred passion has it's counterfeit; for there is a *zeal without knowledge*, the illicit offspring of passion and imprudence, which often hurts the cause which it means to serve, and gives occasion to speak against the genuine zeal of other men. But let us mark the distinction between them, which the world will seldom take the trouble to observe. True zeal springs from charity and love, and is always sweet and patient. It hates the sin, but it loves the sinner. It strains every nerve to accomplish his conversion, making no account of it's toils and pains, and prayers, and sighs, for that purpose. Like that gracious SPIRIT, who is it's author, it returns with growing ardour to it's work, after having been already repulsed a thousand times. It leaves no mean untried. One while it uses prayer, another time promises, and anon threats. True zeal, like love, is ingenious, and devises a thousand arts to reclaim sinners and save souls. If this end is obtained, the man of true zeal is satisfied, whoever may be the instrument. He prefers the good of Jerusalem to every private and selfish consideration; and, like the Baptist, is willing to wax less, if he sees the kingdom of Christ wax greater. Indeed, that minister regards the glory of God but little, who takes any solicitous concern at all about his own —Be thy glory, O my God, advanced, and I care not if my honour, my name, and my memorial, should perish from under heaven! Be thy kingdom enlarged, O my Saviour, and my soul shall be transported with joy, though I should be none of the honoured instruments! Let myriads bow at the foot of thy cross, and, whoever shall have brought them thither, I shall glorify thy free grace, and join in their glad hosannahs! Communicate, O most holy Spirit, the

converting and sanctifying influences of thy grace, and, whether this unworthy worm may or may not be one of the instruments thou shalt deign to use, I will in either case extol thy glorious name! Let Christ be glorified and sinners saved, and my joy shall be full! Let all thy other servants have more zeal and success in thy work than I can reach to, and I gladly rank the very lowest among the prophets, and rejoice to be, in this sense, the meanest in the kingdom of God!

## LECTURE XIII.

### *The same Subject continued,—Of Zeal and Diligence.*

ZEAL, my brethren, is so very important a part of the ministerial character, that I cannot help enlarging upon it, even at the hazard of being considered as tedious. What makes it so necessary to insist so much on this qualification is, that the age we live in is so very lukewarm, and that we are generally apt to take the colour of our character, from the manners of the times; for few, extremely few indeed, ever think of rising above the manners of the age in which they live. But what are the manners of the age to us, who ought to form our character, not on the customs of the world, but on the precepts of the gospel? Now, in the gospel, we find diligence and zeal so necessary, that the wicked and the slothful servant are represented as one and the same character.* Without zeal, therefore, my brethren, we are the reverse of what we ought to be: We are dead, however much we appear to live. Without this, men may be pleased with us, on account of something foreign to our office, or perhaps of something which belongs to it; but God detests us. We may be pleased with ourselves, when we compare our conduct with that of our less regular brethren, ourselves being judges. But this false peace will soon be disturbed. The halcyon-days of a careless minister, like those feigned by the poets, are few in number. The clouds already begin to lour; the

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* Matth. xxv. 26.

storm thickens; the thunder murmurs at a distance; it grows louder and louder as it approaches; it settles over the head of the devoted victim; he cries for help; he looks around for shelter; he has just time to see that he has none to find, when the tempest bursts in one dreadful peal upon his guilty head, transporting his soul on the lightning's wing to the bar of God, and leaving his body in dust and atoms. Then, all his dreams of happiness and ease are gone; then, his false peace forsakes him, and a terrible sound, the cries of souls perished through his negligence, awake him from his sleep, and dispel for ever his fatal slumbers.

Then, who would not wish to stand in the place of the faithful and zealous minister? Of that minister who may have been in weariness, and painfulness, and watchings, often; in hunger, and thirst, and fastings, often; perhaps too in cold and nakedness; and who, besides these outward troubles, bore on his mind continually a deep concern for the interests, not only of his own flock, but of all the churches? But all the labours of his zeal and love, however painful, were soon over, and his works have followed him. The many souls whom he has been the blessed instrument of saving (and of whom he reckoned every one worth all the labour of his life,) are now his joy and the crown of his rejoicing, and will be the cause of unspeakable honour and glory to him in the presence of their common Lord at his coming. Yes, on that day they will add to the splendour of his appearance, and to the glory of his triumph, when he stands with prophets, and apostles and other worthies, in the highest rank of the assembly of the First-born, and of the spirits of the just, conspicuous amidst that *multitude which no man can number*, as one of the brightest stars in the azure heavens.

Do we desire, my brethren, that our reward should

be sure, and our latter end be happy? Then let us be zealous and active in the duties of our office. The want of zeal makes every other qualification useless, and is sufficient of itself to exclude us from glory. That it will do so to too many, is indeed to be dreaded: for, how few are they who discover so much of it as the importance of the business requires? Accordingly it was the opinion of the pious and eloquent Chrysostom, that few ministers should be saved. It is also the observation of an eloquent preacher, whose sentiments on this subject I have often had in my eye, that "God sometimes, in saving "his elect, makes use of instruments which he af- "terwards casts away."* Such instruments may be compared to those cunning Tyrians, who assisted Solomon in building that temple, in whose God they had no interest, and in whose blessings they had no share. This thought should fill the most faithful and exemplary ministers with holy jealousy and fear; a fear from which St. Paul himself, with all his zeal, was not always free. But a careless indolent minister, on hearing it, should tremble. All his joints, at the thought of this, may be loosed, and his knees, like Belshazzar's, smite against each other. Hear, ye careless pastors, though neither impious nor immoral men; hear the character and the vision of Theodorus, and be faithful, be zealous, and be saved.

Theodorus had the pastoral care of the vale of Ormay. The tenor of his life was smooth like the stream which stole through his valley. The path which he trod was always clean; nobody could say, Behold the black spot on the linen ephod of Theodorus. His flock listened with attention to his voice; for his voice was pleasant. His speech dropped from his lips as honey from the summer oak; his words

* Massilon.

were as the dew on the rose of Ormay. The spirit of Theodorus was also meek, and his heart appeared to be tender. But if it was in some degree tender, it was in a higher degree timid. If his soft whisper could not awaken the sleeping lamb, he had not the spirit to lift up his voice and disturb it; no, not even if the lion and the bear should be nigh it. If a thoughtless sheep wandered too near the precipice or the brook, Theodorus would perhaps warn it gently to return. But rather than terrify, alarm, or use any exertion, he would leave it to it's fate, and suffer it quietly to tumble over. The danger of precipices and brooks in general, Theodorus often sung on his melodious reed; but this or that brook he could scarce venture to mention, lest such of his flock as were near them might consider themselves as reproved, and so be offended. He could say in general, Beware of the lion and the bear; but could not tell a poor wandering sheep, Thou art particularly in danger: Nor could he say, In such and such paths the enemy lies in wait to devour thee.

The voice of history should be the voice of truth, and when the motives of actions are doubtful, they should be interpreted with candour. Let, therefore, the conduct of Theodorus be allowed to proceed, not so much from indifference as from a love of ease and a false fear of offending. His flock, because he did not disturb them, believed that he loved them, and they loved him in return. They were indeed, for the most part, a tractable and harmless herd. And though the service of Theodorus had not much zeal, it was not altogether without success. Therefore, without considering that he might, if zealous, do much more, he was satisfied with having, without zeal, done so much. He blessed God, that his labour was so useful, without any remorse for it's not being more so; as it well might, if zeal had given aid to his lazy morals. All around were satisfied

with Theodorus. Theodorus, on comparing himself with all around, was secretly satisfied with himself, and concluded that God was also pleased.

So dreamed Theodorus his life away, and hoped he should open his eyes in heaven when that dream on earth should be ended. Full of these complacent thoughts, he ascended, on a vernal eve, the eastern brow of his vale, to see the calm sun setting in the west. How happy, said he, is the man who departs, like that beam, in peace; and who, like that too, sets but to rise again, with more resplendent brightness, in another world! So may I set, when my evening comes; and so on the resurrection morn may I arise!

As he uttered these words, he heard, as it were, the breath of the evening rustling in the leaves behind him. He turned his eye, and beheld a being whose aspect was brighter and milder than the beam he had been just now beholding. His robe was like the æther of heaven, and his voice was soft as the dying sound on the harp of Ormay, when the daughters of music touch it. Theodorus bowed his head to the ground, and observed a respectful silence. For the angel had spoken peace to him, and, therefore, though filled with awe, he was not afraid — Look down to the valley of Ormay, said the angel, and attend to what thou seest.—Theodorus turned his eye downwards. A light, clearer than the beams of mid-day, shone on the banks of Ormay. In it's beams he beheld a building far surpassing in magnificence the temple of Solomon, or the palace of Tadmor in the desart. Ten times ten thousand hands were conspiring to rear it; and, while he yet beheld, it seemed to be already finished. All the rubbish was ordered away; a deep pit had been prepared to receive it. The scaffolds used in rearing the edifice still remained; and the master builder was consulted how they should be disposed of. Take, said he, the

best of them to be made pillars within the palace, where they shall remain forever; but for the rest I have no further use, and they are indeed good for no other purpose than that which they have already served: Throw them where the rest of the rubbish has been cast, and there, as they are of a grosser and more hardened quality, let them be consumed with the fiercest of the fire.

The order was instantly obeyed. Piece after piece was taken down, and laid to this or the other hand, either for the palace or the pit. As they touched a certain piece, and seemed to think it meet for the pit, Theodorus felt all his frame convulsed, as if a thousand demons moved him; and, in the anguish of his soul, he cried, "Spare me, O my God! spare "me, if it be not now too late to pray for mercy "and pardon."

If it were altogether so, said the angel, I had not been sent to thee now as the minister of instruction. A few moments of grace still remain; improve them with care, and show that at length thou art wise.

Ah, my Lord! what do these things mean? I have indeed perceived their purport; but, O that I might also hear it!

The building which thou hast seen, said the angel, is the church of God; and it's ministers are those instruments which were used to rear it. Many of them having served that purpose, though not as they ought, and being fit for no other use, are at length condemned. I saw the danger that hung over thee, and trembled for thy fate. For, negative virtues and dull morals, without diligence and zeal, can be of no avail to save a minister. Have I not pulled thee as a brand from the fire?—Depart in peace, think of thy danger, be diligent, be zealous, and be saved.

As these words were uttered, the vision in the valley of Ormay vanished, and the angel shook his silver wings as he flew on the wind towards heaven.

The rustling of his wings was like the rushing of the stream of Lora, where it falls between oaks in the gulf of Amur.

## LECTURE XIV.

*That a Minister of the Gospel should have the most intense Love to the Souls of Men, especially those under his pastoral care.*

A MINISTER'S diligence and zeal must always be accompanied with ardent love to his people. In his breast, the sacred passions of zeal and love ought constantly to burn, like the perpetual fire of old upon the holy altar. In his conduct, the fruit of them should constantly appear, so as to make it manifest to his people, that his chief end and aim, in every thing he does among them, is to do them good, and to save their souls. Indeed, every thing that he can do among them, if it be not accompanied with fervent love, will be of little avail to them, and of none at all to himself. Though he speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity or love, he will only be like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbol. Or though he should have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; if he is devoid of charity and love, he is nothing. So affirms, with good reason, the great apostle.

Love, my brethren, is the genius and soul of our religion. In love it began; in love it was carried on; and in love it will be perfected. Love is the new commandment of our Lord, and the peculiar mark and badge of his religion. By this it's professors were so much distinguished in it's first and best ages, that their enemies themselves could not help crying out, "See how the christians love one ano-"ther!" And by this shall all it's true members be so much distinguished, even in it's last and worst times,

that all men shall know them to be Christ's disciples. And were it possible that this character of our holy religion could be lost in all other men, it should still be found indellible in the life and soul of every minister. Whoever is destitute of this grace; nay, whoever has it not in a very high degree, ought to be any thing rather than a minister of the gospel; as of all men in the world his heart ought to be the most affectionate and tender. His work should be altogether a labour of love; one continued act of benevolence and charity. When he preaches, it is the watchman warning his friends of the great and imminent danger which threatens alike their safety and his own. When he prays, and pleads, and urges his message, with sighs, and tears, and earnest entreaties; it is the faithful ambassador, charged with a treaty of reconciliation and peace between God and man; it is the tender shepherd in search of his strayed sheep; the kind father in quest of his lost child. Is it possible to be engaged in such offices, and not feel the strongest emotions of compassion and love, constraining us to expend, or, if necessary, to lay down our lives for our flock?

This love, my brethren, is so essential to our character and office, that it should be our study to excite and cherish it's growth in our souls by all possible means. For this end it will be proper to take a frequent view of it's power and effect in the souls of others. See how it moved the lawgiver of the Jews to wish his own name, for the sake of his people, to be blotted out of the book which God had written. See how it moved the apostle of the Gentiles to wish himself accursed for his brethren. And see, above all, and place frequently before your eyes, the great Pattern of our ministry, and contemplate his infinite love to the souls of men. It was his astonishing love that brought him down from heaven, that made him tabernacle in the flesh, endure all the

wretchedness of life, and suffer all the pains of death upon the cursed tree. For it was not the malice of the Pharisees, the fury of the Jews, the injustice of Pilate, or the treachery of Judas, that occasioned the death of the son of God: It was his own mysterious love, a love stronger than death, that made him willingly submit to all the agonies of dying. It was of his own sole pleasure that this *good shepherd laid down his life for his flock*; for none had power to take that life away.

And is not our intensest love, my brethren, due to the souls of men, which were so highly loved by our Lord? Did he bestow his labour and his life upon them, and shall we grudge to expend our most zealous labours, and our poor lives, in promoting that work for which he lived, and for which he died? Behold him weeping for the approaching calamities of Jerusalem, and learn to compassionate the fate of dying souls. Hear his last prayer for his crucifiers, and learn to make your love triumph over every injury with which an ungrateful world may require it. If the world repays you hatred for love, consider it did the same to your Master; and reckon every opportunity of *doing good, even to the evil and unthankful*, as so many happy occasions of copying his blessed example. So shall you approve yourselves the dear children of your Father which is in heaven. Such opportunities, therefore, if they did not daily occur, ought to be anxiously sought after, rather than at any time avoided. The surest way, too, of engendering in our souls a strong love to our people, is to be always employed in doing them good. For love is not only the cause, but also the consequence, of every good action. Hence the noted observation of Tacitus, that we must hate those whom we injure, and love those whom we serve. Benificence is, therefore, the great mean of exciting and increasing in us this affection of the soul. And, as love procures love,

the grateful return which our benificence will meet with from our people, is likely to produce in us a still higher degree of it. But whatever may be the return, we must persevere and abound in every good work. And, in order to make our love hold out, we must remember that it is not from the world we are to expect the reward of it's labours, but from the Lord Jesus, who, at his appearing, will amply recompense it; putting the crown of immortality upon our heads, and pronouncing, over each, that blessed sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant, "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

To promote further this love, which is so essentitial a part of the ministerial character, we should be exceedingly attentive to bear our people frequently on our hearts before God; and there, like tender parents, plead for pardon for the faults of our children. Nothing has a greater tendency to strengthen our affection to them, and a conscientious and habitual discharge of this part of our duty.*

We should also, as far as christian charity will allow, (and the bounds of it are large indeed!) accustom ourselves often to contemplate our people in the many endearing relations in which they stand to us; as the offspring of one parent, the children of one family, fellow-servants, and fellow-sufferers; as the purchase of Christ's blood, as the members of his body, and, especially as souls entrusted to our guidance and care. We should endeavour to consider them as sharers in the same dangers with ourselves, followers of the same leader, travellers to the same country, and to the same tribunal, dependants on the mercy of the same great Friend, and expectants of the same glory.

In these endearing and eternal relations ought we, if possible, to consider all our people, even the most untoward. At least, if they are not now to be con-

* See above, on Prayer.

sidered in these relations, let us mightily endeavour that they may; and never presume finally to pronounce against them any other sentence. For, is it not one of the properties of charity or love *to hope all things?* Accordingly, we should hope the best concerning even the worst of our children, and not despair of being made the means to save them. Grace sometimes begins where iniquity abounds. When the prodigal son was farthest off, then thought he of returning home. When Saul was persecuting the church of Christ, who would have thought he should be saved? Surely the salvation of any soul under our care cannot be less likely. Let us, therefore, indulge the pleasing thought, that it is possible the worst of our people, through our earnest diligence blessed by the grace of God, may become the seals of our ministry, and the brightest gems in our crown. The very possibility of one such instance of conversion should make us abound in every labour of love, in order to effect it. For the conversion of one soul, it were well worth a minister's while to have come into the world, to have lived, to have laboured, and to have died. How would such a trophy magnify the riches of free grace, and fill the church above and below with joy!

And who will venture to pronounce the salvation of any soul, still out of hell, entirely impossible? Let us leave to the children of this world all rash judgment, and the despairing of any living soul's salvation; but let us, who are the servants of charity, and the ministers of Jesus, be deeply impressed with the character of our function, and with the image of our Lord. Let us *love all men*, but more especially those of our charge, *with a pure heart fervently.* Then our duty will feel easy to us, and we shall deem our labour lighter. Indeed, without love, that labour, that unremitting labour, of watching, and praying, and studying, and preaching; of exhorting, and re-

proving, and visiting, and instructing, *in season and out of season*, and *from house to house*, would be altogether oppressive and intolerable. But, with it, our work will be our pleasure, and the most difficult parts of it will become easy and delightful.

Nor shall that labour which proceeds from a sincere love to the souls of our people, be often bestowed in vain. Let it be manifest that it is this that actuates us, and they will, at least, for the most part, love us in return; they will listen to us, they will obey us. When the first preachers (like the great Shepherd) loved their flock at such a rate as to lay down their lives for their sake, no wonder if the success attending their labours was so very astonishing. And in after ages, where the same love was manifest, it always ensured success. Ardent love triumphed over every opposition, when all other means were tried without effect. The church of Rome used all her arts (and they were not a few) to convert the Northumbrians from Pagan superstition. But worldly motives, more than love to the souls of men, seemed to actuate her emissaries, and their preaching, therefore, was in vain. Aidan, a pious monk of Ionia, did alone what the united force of Rome could not accomplish. By his fervent love, accompanied with good instructions and a holy life, he so charmed the heathens, that he brought them over to the christian faith. After him, Finan, and many others from the same nursery of divines, actuated by the same motive, had the like success in other parts of the kingdom.

"Love your people, (said one of the fathers) and "you may say what you will.*" If we love our people, we may speak to them with freedom and with boldness. Even when our faithful reproofs wound them to the quick; when our awful alarms

* Dilge, et dic quodcunque voles. AUGUST.

disturb the false repose in which they lulled their souls; and when our pointed representations discover to each his own character, and make him clearly perceive that *he is the man*, even then they will listen to us with attention, generally love us, and bless us as their friends. Let us, then, by all the means in our power*, cultivate this reciprocal love between pastor and flock, on which the success of our ministrations, in so great a measure, must depend. Let us endeavour to make ourselves amiable to our people, if we wish to save them. Let us be their consolation, and they will be ours. Let us love them as parents, and they will obey us as children. Let us never do any thing to forfeit their esteem and love; for on this our own souls, and I may say theirs, are depending; for on this depends our influence over them, and the whole fruit of our ministry.

The best advice is but little regarded, where there is neither love nor esteem for the speaker. Hence the ancient rhetoricians† laid it down as a first maxim, That an orator should be a good man; for they judged it impossible for him to persuade his hearers, till they should first think well of him; and from a belief that he had their interest at heart, conceive a regard for him. And indeed there is hardly an instance in history, of any powerful and persuasive orator, who was not also a good and benevolent man. Demosthenes, Æschines, Cicero, Pericles and Pisistratus, were all of this stamp; and, to this cause, no

* "The means to make yourself beloved as well as feared, I comprehend under these six maxims: 1. A good life; 2. Being gentle, obliging, and equitable; 3. Behaving with prudence; 4. Never forsaking your office; 5. Discharging it as you ought; 6. Having courage to speak when you ought, and to give private admonitions."—OSTERWALD *on the Exercise of the Ministry.*

† Arist. Rhet. l. iii. cap. 24. Cicer. de Orat. l. And Quintil. l. 12.

less than to their eloquence, we may attribute their power of persuasion. In like manner, when once we have, by a holy life and unfeigned love, convinced our people of our strong regard for them, our business is in a fair way of succeeding. Moderate talents, animated by zeal and love, will always be found more useful, that is, more successful than the greatest talents without them; as a hot iron, though blunt, will pierce much sooner than a sharper one that is cold. Eloquence and learning are highly necessary; but, if found alone, they never give the preacher the power of persuasion. What does this, under the influence of the spirit of God, is a holy and exemplary life, joined with ardent zeal and love to the souls of men. "He was more subtle than "elegant (says a Bohemian writer of a very ami- "able reformer); but the gravity and austerity of "his manners, his plain and exemplary life, his "mortified and self denied appearance, his sweetness "of temper, and his uncommon affability and love "towards persons of all ranks and conditions, from "the highest to the lowest, gave him much more of "the power of persuasion, than he could possibly "have derived from any eloquence."

We are told of the divine apostle John, that, on the three last days on which he preached the gospel, his age and infirmities were such, that, after having been carried to church, he could only speak one short sentence, and that sentence always the same: "Children, love one another." This was the sum of all the practicable doctrines which he taught, and which we teach; and ought, therefore to be deeply impressed upon our own souls. If the apostle had been to address an audience of ministers in so many words, he would no doubt have said, "Brethren, "love your people." Let us then, my brethren, have fervent love to the souls of our people; and never cease to give them proofs of our regard; for this is the epitome of all our duty.

## LECTURE XV.

*That a Minister of the gospel should be a Man of tender Sympathy and sensibility of Soul.*

THAT a tender sensibility of soul, which easily interests itself in the joys and sorrows of other men, forms a very essential qualification in a minister of the gospel. His office perpetually presents him with objects of compassion, and this affection moves him, to feel and to commiserate their situation. Without this, the sins and miseries which he daily beholds, would become so familiar as to make no impression; nay, they would expose him more than all other men to the danger of becoming altogether callous and unfeeling. This consideration, my brethren, should powerfully engage us to cultivate the most exquisite sensibility of soul, by embracing every opportunity of giving it exercise; for it is by exercise that all the powers of either body or soul are brought to any degree of perfection. What we do often we do with ease, and, I may say, with pleasure too; whereas we become averse to the duty which we have long neglected to perform.

We should, therefore, never allow ourselves to behold with indifference any misery, of body or of mind, among our flock, or indeed among our fellow creatures. We should remove or relieve it, or contribute to do so, if we can, and supplicate the Father of all consolation and mercy in their behalf, whether more be in our power or not. This is our duty, even if they should be ungrateful and insensible to our kindness. Thus Christ wept over the ungrateful city, and prayed for those who fixed him to the accursed

tree. He also requires of us, to *love* even *our enemies* to *bless them that curse us*, and to *pray for them who despitefully use us*. Then shall we approve ourselves the genuine disciples of Jesus, and great shall be our reward in heaven. Is any hungry then? let us feed him. Is any naked? let us clothe him. Is any injured? let us assist him. Is any afflicted? let us comfort him. Is any sick? let us visit him; and search for the orphan, the widow and the stranger, that we may patronise and protect them. In doing all this, in the measure that we can, let us make no account of our little means; and rejoice that God hath declared that, where there is *a willing mind, he will accept according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*; and that even *a cup of cold water*, if we have no more, *shall in no wise lose it's reward*. Let us rejoice that God permits us to put our mite into his treasury, where he will take care of it, till our own soul, in the day of need, shall reap the fruit of it. In a word, let us take into account the present pleasure and the future reward, of this part of our duty, and judge, if it be not indeed *more blessed to give than to receive*.

As precepts, my brethren, are best illustrated and enforced by examples, I cannot, on this occasion, forbear to mention that of the heavenly Deogratias:— "When Rome was sacked by the Vandals in the "year 455, many thousand Romans, of both sexes, "chosen for some useful or agreeable qualifications, "reluctantly embarked on board the fleet of Gen- "seric; and their distress was aggravated by the "unfeeling barbarians, who, in the division of the "booty, separated the wives from their husbands, "and the children from their parents. The charity "of Deogratias, bishop of Carthage, (to which they "were carried) was their only consolation and sup- "port. He generously sold the gold and silver plate "of the church, to purchase the freedom of some,

"to alleviate the slavery of others, and to assist the "wants and infirmities of a captive multitude, whose "health was impaired, by the hardships which they "had suffered in the passage from Italy to Africa. "By his order, too, spacious churches were convert- "ed into hospitals; the sick were distributed in "convenient beds, and liberally supplied with food "and medicines; and the aged prelate repeated his "visits, both in the day and night, with an assidui- "ty that surpassed his strength, and a tender sym- "pathy that enhanced the value of his services. "Compare this scene with the field of Cannæ, and "judge between Deogratias and Hannibal*."

And, if our office calls on us, my brethren, to attend thus to the miseries of the body, much more to those of the soul. The ignorance, the guilt, and the danger of immortal souls, entrusted to us for instruction and guidance, is what must deeply affect us, if we are not past feeling, and altogether hardened. To point out the way to the traveller, to warn the voyager of a rock, or the wayfaring man of a precipice, and to allow another to kindle his lamp or fire by ours, were offices of humanity, which the light of nature taught even the heathens to show to strangers and enemies. And shall not christianity, and our peculiar office as it's consecrated servants, induce us to show compassion to souls which are out of the way; to warn them most affectionately of their danger, when they are rushing on eternal destruction; and to impart light to those who sit in darkness,

* Vide Gibbon, et aut. cit. Deogratius governed the churh of Charthage only three years; and yet, in that short time he gained so much upon the affections of his people, by his services, that their love to him knew no bounds. If he had not been buried privately, it is said, that in their frantic devotion they would have torn his body piecemeal, to keep it as a dear and sacred relic.

and in the shadow of everlasting death? To this our religion and our duty calls us; to this our eternal interest (which we are never to separate from that of our flock) constrains us; and constrains us the more powerfully, as we know not how soon they and we both shall lose the precious opportunity which we now have, of saving, and being saved; for, *our place shall soon know us no more;* others shall speak in it; and others, too, shall hear. It is but a few days till the angel shall lift his hand, and swear, that *Time shall be*, to us, *no more*. Whatsoever, therefore, our hand shall find to do, let us do it with all our might, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; for if there be joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth, what must the happiness and glory of a faithful minister be, at the solemnity of the great day, when, in the presence of all the saints and angels which compose the assembly of the First-born, it shall be declared that he was, under God, the instrument of saving many souls, and of furnishing frequent occasions of joy and rejoicing to all heaven! I see the eyes of men and angels turn upon him, and the judge, with infinite complacence, address him, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou "into the joy of thy Lord!"

But it is not only with respect to the state of others, my brethren, that we are in danger of being insensible and cold. We are also apt to be too little affected with our own state, too little impressed with the sacred office which we bear; and with the solemn truths which we declare; as if the awful truths which we preach to others did not equally concern ourselves! as if the bread of life which we reach to others were not also food for our own souls! It is a melancholy fact, however, that sometimes none is less affected with the truths of the gospel, than the very man who preaches*. Like those who sounded

* "Some decent in demeanor while they preach,
"That task perform'd, relapse into themselves,

the horns before the gates of Jericho, he may strike terror into others, while he himself is free from all apprehension and concern. Hence the preaching of a wicked minister may be sometimes blessed to others, when the preacher himself is rejected of God. In this case, great God! how will the souls who melted under our ministry, and repented at our sermons, condemn ourselves in judgment, if we remain thus insensible and cold? How will they stand astonished at finding, that truths, so awful and affecting in our mouths, had so little effect in softening our hearts, or amending our lives? *You that sealed others* (may they with the apostle say to us), *you are not sealed!* You warned us how terrible a thing it was to fall into the hands of the living God, and yet you yourselves neither loved nor feared him. You announced how necessary it was to worship him in spirit and in truth, and you yourselves gave him only lip service. Ah! you yourselves are become awful monuments of the most dreadful truths which you ever declared. You preached the gospel to others, and you yourselves are cast away. O, how are you fallen, like Lucifer, son of the morning!

The lethargic state which I now speak of, my brethren, is a disease against which we cannot be too much upon our guard. There is nothing so dangerous for a minister as to grow remiss, and to *fall from his first love;* nothing so dangerous as to slumber in a state of insensibility, without a relish for heavenly things, and feeling in his soul the life and power of godliness. If, in such a state, he is free from gross irregularities, it is but the artifice of the devil, not to awaken his remorse, that he may perish the more securely. The danger of such a hard-

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"And, having spoken wisely, soon give proof,
Whoe'er was edified, themselves were not."

ened minister is much greater than that of any of his hearers; for the sleeping sinner may be awakened and alarmed by his gross crimes, and the slumbering saint may be roused by the preacher's sermons; those sermons which to himself are but words of course, grown familiar by frequent using. But the indolence and insensibility of a minister in the exercise of his duty, will not allow him to be either terrified or roused; and his condition is the more fatal by how much his conscience is the more peaceful.

"By the original constitution of our nature, *habit*, "which strengthens our *active* principles, weakens "all *passive* impressions. The more frequently we "consider or feel motives to virtue, without being "really excited to the practice of virtue, the feebler "will be their influence upon us; the greater our "insensibility, the more imminent our danger of ne-"ver yielding to their force. This is an alarming truth "to all human creatures, but to ministers of the gos-"pel more alarming than to others. We must revolve "and preach the duties of the gospel so frequently, "that if they do not influence us early to sincere "and stedfast virtue, they must quickly become fa-"miliar, and lose their power. Moral and divine "considerations must pass so continually through "our minds, that, in a very short time, they will "make no impression on us. A person whom our "profession does not render virtuous, will become "more suddenly and more desperately obdurate in "wickedness than any other man*."

An awful and alarming example of this truth we have in the imperial apostate Julian, who had fairly entered on the inferior offices of the ecclesiastical order, and promised the noblest fruits of faith and piety. He publicly read the holy scriptures in the church of Nicomedia. He prayed, he fasted, distri-

* See Gerard's Syn. Serm. and Butler's Analogy.

buted alms to the poor, gifts to the clergy, and oblations to the tombs of the martyrs. He affected the conversation of bishops the most eminent for their sanctity, and solicited the benedictions of the holiest monks and hermits*. But all this, it seems, he went through as a mere formal exercise, in which the heart had no share; and therefore was easily carried away, by opportunity and temptation, to deny the faith, and at length to persecute those who professed it. So that a minister who is not truly and eminently holy, may be afraid of being soon, if not the most notorious, at least the most hardened, of sinners. If he fall into such a measure of guilt as is ordinary, he will go beyond it quickly. The nature of his office, and the weight of his character, like that of a stone precipitated from the mountain, will increase the velocity of his fall, and insure, as well as hasten, his perdition.

It therefore concerns us nearly, my brethren, to maintain always upon our own souls the clearest and deepest impressions of those glorious things which we daily preach to others. And if we did so more than we do, what a change would be thereby produced upon our lives and sermons! it would amaze a thinking person what matters we preach and speak of, and with how much indifference and coldness! What it is for the soul to be allowed a few moments of grace, then to pass out of this flesh, appear before the righteous God, receive it's final sentence, and enter upon exquisité, endless, and unchangeable joy or torment! O! the gravity, the seriousness, the sensibility, and incessant diligence which the duties of our office require of us! "For my own part (said a faithful minister) "I am ashamed of my stupidity, and wonder at my

* Gibbon, et aut. cit.

" self, that I deal not with my own soul, and those " of others, as one that looks for the great day of " the Lord. I wonder that I can have room for " almost any other thoughts or words, and that " such astonishing matters do not wholly engross " my attention. I wonder how I can preach of " them so slightly and coldly, and let men alone " in their sins, however they take my importunity, " or whatever pains or trouble it should cost me. " I must own I seldom come out of the pulpit but " my conscience smites me, that I have not been " more serious and fervent." " How couldst thou " speak of life and death, of heaven and hell, with " so little emotion? Dost thou believe that this " people have so much sin upon them, and so much " misery before them, and art thou no more af- " fected with their situation?" " Such is the peal " which conscience rings, and yet my soul is not " sufficiently awakened. Save me, O my God! " from insensibility and hardness of heart, other- " wise I can be no fit instrument for saving o- " thers*."

Let us then, my dear brethren, beware of this torpid insensibility, this fatal disease! a disease that would not only destroy ourselves, but also those that hear us. For an insensible, who is consequently an inanimate preacher, communicates the same disposition to his hearers. If the minister nods, the people will slumber. Let us cultivate that true sensibility of soul, which will not only make us *rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep*, but which will also make us feel our own concern in every thing we speak. Then, indeed, shall we speak with power, although our natural endowments and oratorical powers be far from eminent.

" In the midst of the cruelties which the Spa- " niards committed on the Americans, a generous

* See (as it well deserves) BAXTER'S *Reformed Pastor*.

" monk, Bartholomew de Las Casas, stood forth " the advocate of humanity, and the defender of " the rights of mankind. We behold him endea- " vouring, by his remonstrances, his supplications, and " his tears, to wrest the fatal sword from the hands " of his cruel countrymen. We see him incessantly " passing from one hemisphere to the other, and " employing in each the voice of compassion, and " the language of persuasion. We see him have the " courage to bear to the foot of the throne the com- " plaint of the wretched Americans. We see him " brave the haughtiness of the great, and the in- " solence of office, and consecrate, to his generous " purposes, his whole life, his fortune, and his " friends. The goodness of his heart breaks forth " in every sentiment and line, and *his sensibility* " *gives eloquence to his language, though nature did* " *not form him for an orator**."

In like manner St. Paul himself, as we learn from several passages in his Epistles†, seems, humanly speaking, to be more indebted for his success to zeal and sensibility of soul, than to any powers of speech, or talents for eloquence. Of this true sensibility of soul, and of it's powerful effect, his last ser-

* Mehegan. Tabl. de l'Hist. Moderne, II. 343. " O Las " Casas ! thou wert more truly great by thy humanity, than " all thy countrymen with all their conquests ! If ever, in " those ages yet to come, these unfortunate climes shall be " repeopled, and enjoy, with a government of their own estab- " lishment, the blessing of laws, liberty, and peace, the first " statue they shall erect shall be to thee. They will repre- " sent thee interposing between the Spaniard and American, " and presenting thy naked bosom to save the one from the " cruel poignard of the other. At the foot of the monument " shall be inscribed, " In a ferocious and cruel age, Las Casas, " whom you see, was the advocate of humanity." RAYNAL. East and West Ind.

† 2 Cor. x. 10. and xi. 16, &c.

mon to the Ephesians is a striking example. He delivered it *with many tears*; the people *wept sore, fell on his neck, kissed* the departing servant of God, and *sorrowed most of all for this, that he said they should see his face no more.* "O how deep into the heart "go those periods that are sown in the unforced, un- "invited tears of the preacher* !"

* Robinson on Claude.

## LECTURE XVI.

*That a Minister of the Gospel should be faithful in declaring the whole Counsel of God.*

WITH our minds prepared by knowledge, study, prayer, and those other qualifications which we have mentioned, we enter with advantage on the composition and delivery of our sermons. With these qualifications, we may hope for the guidance of the divine Spirit to lead us into all truth, and to enable us to lead our people in the way of salvation, by declaring to them the whole counsel of God. Such fidelity becomes the trust reposed in us, as ambassadors for Christ. We must say nothing but what we are authorised to say; nor, on the other hand, must we conceal or disguise one *iota* of our message. *Of all the words that I command thee,* saith God, *diminish not a word.*

This fidelity is so important a part of a minister's character, that the apostle seems to have laid particular weight on it, in that solemn appeal which he makes to the elders of Ephesus, concerning his own conduct in this respect. *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God.* Thus, my brethren, must we preach the law of God, (that *law* which is *exceeding broad*), in all it's extent, in all it's spirituality and strictness, as reaching to every thought, word, and action; to every condition, and to every creature. We must enforce it by all it's sanctions of threatenings and promises, in order to establish, if possible, the grace of God in the souls of men.

Whatever our people need, and ought to know, it is our business to teach them; and, whatever they ought to do, it is our business to enjoin them; praying always to God for direction to choose our subjects, as well as for aid to treat them as we ought. We should also study, by every proper and prudent mean, to become acquainted with their opinions and their practices, that we may the better know how to address them, and be able to lay their hearts and their lives open before them. We must press them to acquire the graces and virtues which they most need, and to guard against the sins to which they are most addicted, or most exposed. We must, especially, labour to excite them to a due sense of their guilt and unworthiness, to earnest desires of pardon, to fervent love to him who loved them, to unlimited resignation to the will of God, with the most earnest and sincere endeavours of cheerful, constant and universal obedience to his laws. We must warn them against profaneness, lukewarmness, injustice, uncharitableness, and unlawful gratifications. We must caution them against the immoderate love of this world, and direct their souls to look and long for a better. We must direct them to use every proper mean of advancing in holiness; such as, reading, meditation, prayer, and watchfulness. We must direct them, especially, to attend, to make conscience of attending, on all the public ordinances of religion; but caution them against growing formal, or laying undue stress on these ordinances, as they can avail us only so far as they contribute to our improvement in holiness and virtue. We must teach them the absolute necessity of uniting morality and piety; as no outward honesty or regularity will excuse the want of devotion, any more than the exercise of devotion will atone for the want of morality.

While we inculcate the observance of moral duties, we must, after the example of our Master, di-

rect the chief attention of our people to the more ordinary and useful virtues of justice, charity, humanity, humility, meekness, purity, self-command, and self-denial. If these virtues are well cultivated in the soul, the more splendid ones will exert themselves of course, when the rarer opportunity of showing them occurs. The general habits of virtue will naturally adapt the soul for the discharge of any particular duty, to which the emergency of the moment calls it. The cultivated field will produce, not only the herb for food, but the flower for show, if the seed at any time is thrown into the soil.

With these practical truths, we must teach our people the nature, evidence and importance of our holy religion; the miserable condition of fallen man in general, which our own actual sins have made still more deplorable. We must make them acquainted with the redemption wrought out for them by Jesus Christ, the nature and importance of true faith in him, and their absolute need of the grace of the divine Spirit to enable them to obey his precepts. We must, especially, instruct them in the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of christianity, the dignity of the person of Christ, his incarnation, his life, his death, his atonement and propitiation, his resurrection and intercession, his universal sovereignty, and his ordination to be the judge of the quick and of the dead at the last day; as also the various offices or operations of the Holy Spirit. This will be addressing them as christian ministers ought to address a christian audience. It will also be promoting the great end of preaching; which is, holiness of life and conversation. For, justice, charity, repentance, and devotion, naturally flow from those truths of our holy religion. Every office of our blessed Saviour, and every relation in which we stand to him, requires some correspondent duty on our part, which ought to be carefully inculcated. Is he our prophet?

we ought to learn of him. Is he our king? we ought to obey him. Is he our priest? we ought to rely on his intercession and his sacrifice. Is he our physician? we ought to take the remedies which he prescribes. Is he our pattern? we ought to follow his example.

In like manner ought we to inculcate the duties corresponding to the relations and operations of the Holy Spirit, whose illuminating, aiding, consoling, and sanctifying influences, we may always expect, in proportion as we comply with his motions, implore his presence, and sincerely co-operate with his suggestions. We ought to inculcate, that the life and death of Christ were not more necessary to redeem us, than the operations of the Spirit are to sanctify us; and that, as without faith in the Son, we cannot please, so, without the sanctification of the Spirit, we cannot see God.

It is especially our duty to represent Christ, to poor perishing sinners, as an all-sufficient Saviour, suited to all their wants and exigencies. We are to show the fullness and freeness of his grace; to publish his invitations in their unlimited terms; and to urge them, with the most powerful motives that can be drawn from the love and from the wrath of God; from the joys of heaven, and from the terrors of hell; from all the glorious and dreadful realities of an approaching and eternal world.

With regard to the mysteries of religion, or those deep things of God, which, in our present state, we cannot comprehend but darkly, the pulpit is not the place to treat of them. In any place, indeed, our faculties are very inadequate to their investigation. They are *high as heaven, what can we know? deep as hell, what can we understand?* With a modest and humble faith we may view them at a distance; but, if we attempt to sound their depth, we soon go beyond our own. And, whatever side we take of

those disputes to which many of them, such as, free-grace and free-will, election, reprobation, and the like, gave rise, we shall find it to be attended with many difficulties. It will, therefore, be prudent to observe the maxim of Plato, "never to attempt to handle any question upon which it is impossible to decide." Our wisdom is to turn away our dazzled and feeble eyes from beams of so much brightness, that the contemplation of them, like that of the sun, must, at first, pain us, and, at length, blind us It was never intended that we should search into the secret decrees of God, either for rules of action, or sources of consolation. He hath shewn thee, O man, thy duty, by the consciousness he has given thee of a power to choose the good, and to refuse the evil. Listen to the dictates of this power, and keep from the labyrinth of fatality, in which all who entered it have been lost for want of a clue to guide them. From a study so unavailing, and so dangerous, let us then avert our thoughts; and fix them on the milder beams of the divine mercy, as manifested through Christ; on the pure laws, and sublime promises of his gospel; on the goodness of his present government; and on the equity of his future judgment. Secret things belong to God, but things revealed, to us and to our children. For ever and ever, therefore, let us inculcate the superior importance of a strong sense of love and duty to God, founded on just and worthy conceptions of his nature, and manifested by a life of obedience and resignation, by a life of devotion, self-government, and charity. Let us teach the necessity of believing in those mysteries, so far as God has given us any knowledge of them in his word; but then leave them, without offering any minute explanation of them; for so God himself has left them. Read them you

may, but explain them you cannot; for of this the divine and the peasant are equally incapable.

Rabbi *Hillel*, surnamed *The Holy*, sat in the chair of Moses, and around his feet five score of the sons of the prophets. His fame for sanctity and wisdom was such, that it became a bye-word. If the Messiah were then alive, he should be looked for in the person of Hillel. But every man, in his best estate, is vanity. Hillel wished to explore, and to explain, the mystery of the divine decrees; and, in order to prepare himself for such deep meditation, had spent two days in prayer and fasting. On the third, he ascended the top of Carmel, and sat down beneath the shade of a Juniper. Here his mind collected it's force, to cast his thoughts towards heaven and hell, eternity and infinity. But his thoughts recoiled on his own breast, like stones from the top of Gerizzim. Hillel at length, tired of his fruitless contemplation, turned, by chance, his eye towards a spot of earth not very distant, in which something seemed to be moving. It was a mole, which, in his darksome abode, had perceived that there was such a thing as light, and forgetting the weakness of his organs, desired to contemplate the sun at mid-day. But no sooner had he left his element, than blinded by the splendour of meridian beams, he wished himself again in his subterraneous lodgement. But, ere he could accomplish his retreat, an eagle snatched him away, and flew with her prey towards the valley of the son of Hinnom.—Blessed be God, said Hillel, who hath conveyed instruction to the mind of his servant, and thus warned him of the folly and danger of prying into that knowledge which it's difficulties shows to be forbidden. With respect to the decrees of God, the sons of men are moles, incapable of exploring the source of light. Ignorant of almost every thing on earth, how can they search out any thing in heaven? Ignorant of what

relates to their own nature, will they presume to explain what relates to the nature of the God who made them ?

Upon the whole, my brethren, there are undoubtedly some truths of more importance than others ; as in an edifice the pillars are of more consequence than the ornaments. A proper selection, therefore, in the subjects of our sermons, is so far from being contrary to the ministerial fidelity which I speak of, that it is, indeed, a very essential part of it. The moments which we spend with our people in the house of God, are exceedingly precious, and ought to be chiefly devoted to subjects of the utmost importance. By these I mean the great and leading truths of christianity, mentioned above ; or more particularly such of them as are most likely to do good to souls, in the present circumstances of our people. There is, however, a mutual connexion between all the truths of religion, insomuch that none can be rejected without injuring those that are retained. The threatenings from mount Sinai, and the promises from mount Sion, the duties and the privileges of the gospel, are so closely interwoven, that you must take all or none. And should your people but suspect you of a wish to conceal or to disguise any sacred truth whatever, few would be pleased, many offended, and none edified. To make light of any part of the truths of revelation, would indeed argue want of reverence to the Spirit that inspired them all. Accordingly, the most awful threatening is denounced against the man, who will add any thing to the word of God, or take any thing from it. " If any man shall add un- " to these sayings, God shall add unto him the " plagues that are written in this book. And if any " man shall take away from the words of the book " of this prophecy, God shall take away his part

" out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, " and from the things which are written in this " book."

## LECTURE XVII.

*The same Subject continued,—Of declaring the whole Counsel of God.*

AS we ought to declare the whole counsel of God, so, my brethren, ought we to divide aright the word of truth. Prudence and discretion, cardinal virtues in all, but more especially in a minister, must point out the seasons in which particular truths are likely to do most good, and then they ought to be handled. Attention to providence, to the prevailing vices of the place, or of the times, and to the present circumstances of our people, may help to direct us in the choice of subjects, which ought always to be preached from the most striking texts that we can find. Characters strongly marked, historical passages, a parable, conversation, miracle, or some narrative concerning any remarkable person or event, fix the attention, and lay hold of the memory, and may, therefore, furnish us often with proper texts or topics for our sermons. In these matters, however, it would be wrong to follow any one particular line, when scripture furnishes so rich a variety. Novelty too, is pleasing, and helps to engage the attention; for which reason, we ought perhaps to preach seldom more than once at a time from the same passage. Besides the exigencies of our people are so various, that if we treat of precise and particular subjects, as for the most part we ought, it is necessary to change them often, in order to suit the variety of cases, characters, and tastes, of the multitude who hear us.

Perhaps the most likely way to take in the whole extent of our duty, and to profit as well as to please our people most, would be, to deal more in lecturing* than in preaching, provided we do it with judgment and care, and in a manner that will engage and interest. Of the two, this is by far the most difficult, and therefore that which is seldomest used; at least used as it ought; for it is sometimes gone about without due preparation or study, and consequently gone through in so drawling and slovenly a manner, as to make it, if not useless, at least disgusting and tiresome. If, in the mode of managing this exercise, were I to propose a model, I should not hesitate to name St. Chrysostom, as in many respects worthy of imitation. He is not only learned and useful, but interesting and lively; always awake himself, he never allows even his readers to sleep or be tired.

In lecturing, some err by saying too much, and attempting to explain what is already clear. Their text is too short, their comment too long. On every word or sentence they think they must say something, by which means they generally darken, always weaken, the word of God. Others, to show their learning or their reading, go out of their way, to tell their hearers this or the other fact or opinion, which they are neither the wiser nor the better for knowing; nay, of which probably they had better have been totally ignorant. Therefore, my brethren, when you lecture, read always a large portion of scripture; give a clear and concise view of it; explain what is dark; let alone what is already clear; make a few striking reflections on narratives, characters, providences, promises, and precepts; and all

* *i. e.* Reading and explaining a large portion of Scripture, and adapting it's practical uses to the circumstances of the hearers.

with a direct view to mend the heart, and influence the conduct. In every thing you say, let it be your only aim to make your people more virtuous and holy. In the course of every year or too, (as did the Jews and first Christians) you might thus go through at least the greater and more interesting part of scripture, in it's chronological order, carrying always along with you the chain of history and prophecy, and observing how all the scriptures, from first to last, point to a Saviour, and have, for their end, the sanctification and salvation of our souls. Thus may you hope to edify and instruct, and, at the same time, please and entertain your hearers. Thus, too, will you teach them, that the end of meeting in church is, to worship God, and to hear his word; and not merely, or principally, to hear a sermon.

On some occasions, too, the faith and practice of a christian, or the doctrines and duties of christianity, might be treated systematically, by classing and arranging them duly, and using, as much as may be, the language of scripture*. Some, perhaps, may object, that, as most people already know the scriptures, neither of these methods has the novelty or variety of a sermon, and will, therefore, be not so pleasing; although I hope they will allow them to be at least equally useful. I might have thought as they do, if I had not made the trial. But experience has corrected my judgment; for I find, by this course, that my people are better pleased, as well as more edified. It is true, almost all have the scriptures in their hands; but it is astonishing how little the greatest part of them know of their contents. It is also almost incredible how little an or-

* Gastrell's Christian Institutes;—Stevenson's Faith and Duty of a Christian;—and Warden's System of revealed Religion, are constructed in this manner.

dinary congregation is benefited by a sermon, and how poor an account the most attentive can sometimes give of it, after they have heard it. One may perhaps preach an hour (in the manner that some do), and hardly one of a thousand be the wiser or the better. But not so if he read but a few minutes in the scriptures. Besides we ought to use the scriptures as we do our prayers, not so much with a view to inform our heads, as to impress our hearts, and to advance in piety; not to learn more, but to improve what we know already.

On these accounts, I must say, that to read the scriptures, and to worship more, and preach less. in our religious assemblies, would certainly tend more to cultivate the religious affections of the soul, as few will find themselves more edified by a sermon, than by a select portion of scripture. To this we may add, that the sermons of the present age are generally more calculated to please and entertain the ear, than to work compunction in the soul, and change the heart. Hence the hearers almost always go away forming some opinion of the talents of the preacher, or the merits of the sermon, rather than silently meditating on the subject, and applying it to their own situation. Accordingly, we go to church, as we say, "to hear a sermon," and not to speak to God, or to hear God speak to us, which ought to be the principal ends of our attending the courts of the house of God*.

* "Perhaps it were to be wished (says Voltaire, speaking "of Bourdaloue), that, in banishing from the pulpit that "false taste by which it had been debased, he had also sup- "pressed the custom of preaching upon a text. In reality, "to speak a good while upon a quotation of one or two lines, "to weary one's self in accommodating the whole discourse "to that line, seems to be a practice little suiting the grav- "ity of a divine. The text is a kind of device, or rather

But whether we lecture, or preach, or read the scriptures, as a wise steward will not only give his household their food in due season, but also give each his due portion, so ought we. The word of truth, which we must divide aright, consists of law and gospel, of promises and precepts, of grace and duty, of terror and joy. Some of those who are to be nourished with this spiritual food are *babes*, who must be *fed with milk:* Others are grown up, and must be fed with stronger meat. Wandering souls are to be gathered in, unstable ones are to be settled, secure sinners are to be alarmed, backsliders are to be admonished, reproved, or threatened, as their cases respectively require; and the weary and heavy laden are to be raised and supported. In doing all this, we must use the utmost plainness and impartiality. We must *not slay the souls that should not die, nor save the souls alive that should not live.* We must neither despise the lowest, nor yet fear the highest of the sons of men. Who is there indeed of whom we should be afraid? Shall an ambassador of the KING of kings be overawed, or afraid to declare his message before any of his fellow-worms, the children of men! If he should, he must be utterly unworthy of the high trust reposed in him. It is not cowards, but soldiers, that God hath occasion for in his holy warfare.

To glorify God, by saving souls, should be the only end in our view. And, to attain to this, we ought to exert all our faculties, and lay out all our talents; to be above the fear of man, and to declare the whole counsel of God, without concealing or

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"enigma, to be explained by the sermon. This custom was "unknown to the Greeks and Romans. It arose upon the "decline of letters, and has been consecrated by time." *Life of Louis XIV.*

Fas est et ab hoste doceri.

disguising one jot of it. But, alas! we are not always what we ought to be. In all ages, there have been preachers of a different stamp in the church of God; preachers who wished to join their own interests with those of their ministry, and to keep both God and the world on hand. "Servants of "Jesus, and slaves to your own interests and passions! you make merchandise of the word of "God, you *make merchandise of the souls of men!* "Behold, ye temporising preachers! behold St. "Paul, and blush at your baseness. Before Felix, "before Drusilla, he cries, *The unclean shall not "inherit the kingdom of God!* Had he consulted "with flesh and blood, he had chosen any other "theme but this, considering the situation in which "he stood at the time. But the good of souls, and "not his own interest, was his aim. All-penetrated "with a sense of the dignity of his office, he forgets "the grandeur of Felix! He does more, he makes "Felix forget himself!*" The Roman governor trembles before the poor tent-maker of Tarsus, and hears with respect the censure of those crimes to which he knew himself addicted. Felix was addicted to pleasure, he was covetous, he was unjust; and therefore St. Paul preaches to him of temperance, righteousness, and a judgment to come.

In mentioning this character of St. Paul, our thoughts are naturally called to that bishop of Milan, who, in this respect, copied his example so well, by his plain and faithful dealing with the emperor Theodosius, whom he debarred from the Lord's table, on account of an act of cruelty which he had recently committed. "With what eyes, (said St. Am-"brose, meeting him at the door of his church) "with what eyes can you behold the temple of Him "who is Lord of all? With what feet can you tread

* Massilon.

" his holy place? How can you stretch out those " hands to receive the blessed elements, when they " are yet reeking with innocent blood? How can " you take the symbol of the precious blood into that " mouth, which gave out such barbarous and bloody " orders? Depart, therefore, and take heed that you " do not increase your first crime by the commis- " sion of a second."

Thus, my brethren, should ministers discharge their duty with fidelity, and support the dignity of their character, and of their order, and procure respect to themselves, as well as reverence to the holy ordinances of religion. Like the *chosen men* sent by the council of Jerusalem, they should be ready even to *hazard their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.** And what though they should actually lose their lives for his sake. Shall they not thereby more truly find them? In our Father's house are many mansions; and if we are driven out of one of them for his sake, we have little faith, indeed, if we are not sure of being admitted into a better. It is not like the wisdom of the great Architect to show his friends, in the first instance, into the best apartment of his edifice, and disappoint their future expectations. No; we are yet but in the portico or outer court of his building; and if our enemies refuse us a share in this common apartment, and thrust us forward a little before the time, they do us good instead of evil, although it was not their purpose. The utmost malice of man can only kill the body. And what then? " Anytus and Me- " litus may kill me," said Socrates, " but cannot " hurt me." A faithful minister, as he says of a good man, needs fear no evil, either in this or the future world. While he minds his duty, he may safely cast all other care on God. It is thus only

* Acts xv. 25, 26.

that a minister may hope to secure even that esteem and regard of men, which some are so much afraid to lose.

Far, however, be it from me to say, that a preacher should ever give way to the spirit of railing, or throw out any personal reflections in his sermons. There is nothing from which he should keep at a greater distance, than this, as it would only expose his own faults, without correcting those of his people. Besides, the time and place are so sacred, that, to speak in this manner, would be to mispend the one, and profane the other. "Plato, (said Dionysius "who had injured him) thou wilt speak ill of me, "when thou art with thy philosophers in the acade- "my."—"God forbid (answered Plato) that we "should have so much time to lose in the academy "as to speak of Dionysius."

It is against the sin, by brethren, that we ought to point our arrows, and not against the person of the sinner*. If, indeed, the sinner shall feel himself pained when the preacher hits his mark, who can help it? He, and all alike him, should be made sensible of their sin and danger, though they may not wish to think or to hear of either. Like that faithful prophet Micajah, we must declare what the Lord hath spoken, if we should thereby incur the displeasure of Ahab. We are set as watchmen over the house of Israel, and if we give no warning of the danger which we see approaching, the souls of multitudes may perish through our neglect, but their blood shall be terribly required at our hands another day. Our own danger, therefore, and our duty, call equally loud with the neces-

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* "Father, (said Louis XIV. to a pracher who had fal- "len into this fault) I like well enough to take my share of "a sermon, but do not choose to be made the subject of it."

VOLTAIRE'S LOUIS XIV.

sities of our people, for the utmost plainness and freedom of speech; for *if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for the battle?**

Poor guilty mortals love to be soothed, and to be allowed to sleep on the brink of the precipice. But will this foolish and perverse humour, on their part, excuse the want of fidelity or compassion on ours? What should we think of that preacher who should thus address his hearers? "My dear flock, you wish "to perish quietly; perish so. You hate to have "your consciences disturbed in your sinful courses; "you may then pursue them without any let or mo- "lestation from me. I would not for the world of- "fend you, or *torment you before the time.* From this "day forward, I shall touch on none of your sins; I "shall only treat of vague and general subjects, and "that too in a manner that will by no means alarm "you. Some diseased minds, I know, are ready to "take offence, when the preacher thought of giving "no cause. Conscious of having merited reproof, "they imagine that what is said is aimed at them- "selves. But I will guard as much as possible against "offending even these. I will cast all my harmless "darts so wide of the mark, as to raise no suspicion, "even in such, of their having been designed for "them. Thus, my dear flock, we shall live together "in amity and peace, neither disturbing nor disturb- "ed."

Yes, "Men may *live* fools, but fools they cannot "*die.*" We may sacrifice our duty to a base complaisance, a slavish fear, and live in a sinful league with our people; but will they answer for us when we come to die, or will they stand between us and

* "Si cujus igitur sermo non pungit, sed oblectationem "facit audientibus, iste non est sermo sapientes, *verba* quippe "*sapientium ut stimuli.*" JEROM.

the wrath of Jehovah when we come to be judged? No; this they dare not promise; on this we dare not rely. We must, therefore, deal plainly by the souls of men, whether they will be pleased or not. A regard to God, to duty and to truth, and a consciousness of having acted our part as we ought, should more than balance every other consideration. Yes, my brethren, when we cannot please God and men, we cannot be at a loss whose favour we ought to prefer. It is to God, our master and our judge, that we are to approve ourselves, and not to men, however rich or great. Yet, even from these, a faithful reproof will get more love and honour at the last than a sinful silence, or a criminal dissimulation. The Baptist reproved Herod, for which Herod reverenced the faithful Baptist. Paul reproved the dissimulation of Peter, yet Peter commended the wisdom of his reprover. Luther reproved Calvin, for which Calvin called Luther a faithful servant of God. The bold and elegant Chrysostom reproved, with unparalleled severity, that mighty city of which he had the pastoral charge, and, in the most solemn manner, told it's inhabitants, that out of all their thousands he could scarcely hope, if they went on, that even one hundred souls could be saved! And how did this people receive so dreadful a censure? Did they hate the man who gave it, did they persecute him, did they kill him? No; on the contrary, when he was persecuted by the Herodias of the times, they prayed, "that the sun might rather withdraw "his beams, than that the mouth of faithful Chry-"sostom should be stopped."

Further, in the texture of our sermons, and in the discharge of our duty, we should divest ourselves not only of all respect of persons, but also of all the ties of blood and relation. It is to the eternal honour of Levi, that Moses records of him, in this sense, that *he said unto his father, and to his mother, I have*

*not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children.* Thus should ministers of the gospel be free of all partiality, prejudice and passion, if they wish to be accounted faithful stewards in the house of God. With a single eye to the glory of God and the good of souls, they should go through every part of their function.

When we say that a minister should be faithful in declaring all the counsel of God, we must observe, that, before he can discharge this part of the duty aright, he must be irreproachable in regard to his own morals. He can never reprove with boldness or success those things to which he himself is addicted, nor can he warmly recommend those virtues and graces, to which he himself is a stranger. Lamentable, indeed, is the case of that minister who thus dares not, for shame, inculcate every duty, and reprove every sin with freedom: But altogether desperate is his condition, if, with horrid unfaithfulness, he either conceals or explains away any necessary truth, in order to reconcile his wicked conduct to his holy calling. A minister must, therefore, be blameless, a minister must be pious, a minister must be holy, before he can preach to his people their duty in it's full Spirit and extent. Otherwise, his preaching is a satire upon himself; it is, according to the proverb, as if Satan should reprove sin.

A faithful minister, I will yet add, will not only preach the gospel of God in all it's Spirit and extent, without any human or selfish regard, and give, in his life, a true comment on his sermons, but will also urge every message which he delivers, *chiefly* by arguments and motives derived from the gospel itself*. "When we preach what is the result of mere human "reason, we practically declare that we have no high

* "How oft, when Paul has served us with a text,
"Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully preach'd." COWPER.

" esteem for the gospel, and have forgot our com-
" mission as ambassadors of Christ. It would be rec-
" koned arrogant presumption even in the ambassa-
" dor of an earthly prince, should he exceed his in-
" structions, and betake himself to his own sagacity
" in adjusting the differences of his sovereign with
" neighbouring states. And can an ambassador com-
" missioned by him in whom are hid all the treasures
" of wisdom and knowledge, be thus unfaithful,
" without the most daring and impious insolence?
" He bids fairest to preach with success, who preach-
" es in words, not of man's wisdom, but which the
" Holy Ghost teacheth†." A faithful minister knows,
" that " the great God is jealous of the honour of his
" Son Jesus, and will not condescend to bless any o-
" ther mean than that which he hath established for
" saving sinners. *If the prophets will not stand in his*
" *counsel, nor cause the people to hear his words*, they
" will never be able to *turn Israel from the iniquity of*
" *their ways, nor the evil of their doings.* No, my
" brother, had you all the philosophy of Socrates,
" the knowledge of Plato, and the morals of Epicte-
" tus; were you furnished with all the flowing ora-
" tory of Cicero, and with Demosthenes's thunder;
" and could you employ all these talents in every
" sermon you preach, yet you could have no reason-
" able hope of saving one soul by all these, without
" the aids of the gospel. It is the gospel alone that is
" *the power of God unto salvation.* And though e-
" very sort of weapon may be used, and ought to
" be used in it's proper place, to make assaults on the
" kingdom of Satan; yet it is only *through the blood*
" *of the Lamb* that we can obtain the *victory*—
" Though every balm may be applied to our
" wounds, it is the gospel alone that can furnish us
" with those sovereign remedies, that can heal the

† Dr. Erskine's Syn. Serm.

" diseases of the soul, and reform mankind. Unless, " therefore, you have such an high esteem for the " gospel of Christ, and such a sense of it's divine " worth and power, as to take it along with you in " all your efforts to save souls, you had better lay " down the ministry, and abandon your sacred pro- " fession, for you will but *spend your strength for* " *nought*, and waste your breath in vain declama- " tion. You will neither save your own soul, nor " those that hear you; and you will have a terrible " account to give at the last day, of what you have " done with this gospel, which God did you the ho- " nour to put you in trust with, for the salvation of " souls*."

Besides deriving the arguments or motives by which we enforce our message, chiefly from the gospel, it is likewise of much consequence that we shall generally make use of scriptural language. It is from not attending to this, that the christian church has been so often distressed with unhappy divisions and keen disputes. All parties agree about the text, and differ only about some modes of explanation. Terms of art have been invented to express this or that doctrine or mystery in the word of God, which had better have been let alone in the simplicity, or, if you will, in the obscurity, in which God himself hath left them. Attempts have been made to pass those terms as current coin upon the world: But such attempts have been as often opposed; as God, in order to guard the human mind from error, has implanted in it a strong jealousy of innovations in religion, and an extreme aversion to that tyranny with which some men would lord it over the conscience. Hence the theological disputes and the religious wars which have long infested, and still infest, the church

* WATTS's Humble Attempt towards the revival of practical religion.

of Christ. The inventions of men, and not the revelation of God, are the ordinary cause of them. For if, in all disputed points, men would satisfy themselves with using only the language of scripture, and not affect to be wise above what is written, all parties might soon be reconciled.

Therefore, my brethren, let us, at least in all matters of dispute, adhere invariably to the language and mode of expression used in the scriptures. Let us not presume to attempt the explaining or defining of what has not been explained or defined by the inspired writers, lest we draw on ourselves the curse denounced against those who would add to the word of God. Let us not attempt to impose a hardship on the consciences of men, which God himself hath not imposed, lest we shall be found exalting ourselves in the place of God, and warring against him in his holy temple. Let us remember it is not only the peace of others, but our own happiness too, that is concerned. Therefore, to secure both, and to avoid giving offence to God or man, it is surely worth while to hold, in every dark or disputed point, by the express and identical language of scripture, which will answer every purpose of edification.

A plain man, who seeks his religion only in his Bible, and reads that sacred volume with no other view than to know and perform his duty, will meet with very few things at which he will stumble. A good man, who had taken this course with comfort, for the most of his life, fell in at length with a book which pretended to explain a great many difficulties and mysteries, which hitherto he had not observed. From this he passed to another, which gave a quite different account of such matters. As he understood neither so well as his Bible, he took down a long list of their learned words and hard terms, in order to examine what was said of them in the scriptures. But, in the scriptures, to his astonishment,

he could find no such expressions; nor did he apprehend such darkness in the doctrines, as in the pretended explanations. The fools, said he, are fighting about their own fictions, and the water that was pure is soiled by their footsteps. I will leave their polluted streams to themselves, and return again to the fountain. O God, who knowest all things, thou knowest I love thee, and sincerely desire to know thy will, as revealed in the holy scriptures. If in any thing I err, thou knowest it is owing to the weakness of my powers, and not to the perverseness of my heart. I trust, therefore, I know so much of thy nature as to make me sure of one thing, that thou wilt, through Jesus Christ, pity this weakness, and not charge me with guilt for my involuntary and invincible ignorance. Let others, therefore, dispute; I will love, adore, and obey, which, I am satisfied, will, through the merits of my Saviour, procure me thy favour and acceptance.

## LECTURE XVIII.

*That a minister of the gospel should study clearness of Method and Plainness of Stile.*

TO teach and to persuade men to be holy is the end proposed by preaching. To attain this end, the preacher's business in a sermon is, to explain convince, and to move the passions. Whatever subject he treats of, the first point is, to make the nature of it clear and plain to the understanding: The next is, by solid and clear, and strong proofs, to convince the judgment: And the last is, to move the passions, and to persuade to what he proposes. To attend to this order is of the utmost importance to the sacred orator, as much of the success of his preaching, humanly speaking, must depend upon it; for how should he hope to persuade a rational being to any thing he proposes, till he make him first understand what it is, and see that it is his interest to take his counsel. Attention to the order just now laid down will likewise direct to the stile and delivery proper for each part of the sermon. The stile of the first should be simple, easy, and unadorned; that of the second, clear, strong, and forcible; and that of the third, more lively, ornamented, and pathetic. In like manner, the delivery of the first should be calm, soft and insinuating, much the same as in conversation; of the second, slow, firm, and determined; and of the third, more quick, warm, and passionate. In a word, the language and delivery should be successively adapted to the understanding, the judgment, and the passions; for these are successively addressed

In laying down your method, you must observe that your division of the subject be natural, the transitions easy, the connection clear, the introduction and conclusion short and pertinent. Let your heads be few, and never run into each other, nor digress to any thing foreign. Let all your heads,and all your arguments under them, conspire to one fixed determinate point, by rhetoricians called *unity*.—If you offer to divert the attention from one thing to another, you fix it on nothing; and you will neither engage nor interest it. Every thing, therefore, that you advance, must, like all the oxen in the team, draw exactly the same way, and directly tend to the same point. The not attending to this is the reason that so many sermons produce so little effect upon the hearers.

Having fixed your method, you are next to choose and rank your arguments. Let these be strong rather than many. Too many will tire; and the weak, like the equipage of an Eastern march, will only incommode the strong, and hurt the cause, which does not at all need them. Place your strongest arguments last, and the less powerful in the middle, rather than in the front. Offer no proof of what is self-evident or believed already, lest you should shake the faith that is already firm. For the same reason, you are to raise no objections. These will be remembered when your answer is forgotten; and if your people know only the truth, and do it, they are surely happy in their ignorance of error.

Whatever arguments or illustrations you make use of, you must observe, that they be not only strong, but clear and easily comprehended. Every word of them must be plain, and the subject from which they are taken familiar. Your chief proofs, however, must always rest on the sacred scriptures. Short and plain reasonings, founded on their autho-

rity, are always the most likely to produce conviction; for such is the Holy Spirit's teaching.

But while you are thus solicitous about your matter, you must not divest yourself of all care about your language. This, however, for your greater ease, (by the division of labour), ought not to be thought of till you have first jotted down your matter. Then when you come to the composition of your sermons, you ought neither to affect a pompous diction, nor yet descend to the low and mean stile. You should not be slovenly, nor yet show much labour and art. A certain majestic simplicity best becomes an ambassador of Jesus. In this, as in every thing else, Jesus himself hath left us an example. In all his discourses, what a beautiful simplicity, mixed with incomparable dignity and majesty! All the inspired writings indeed are marked with perspicuity and plainness, as their distinguishing character, when prophecy and mystery require not some veil to be thrown over them. Hence it is the peculiar excellence of scripture, that almost every sentence of it, taken single and detached, is no less beautiful and useful, than when considered in it's connection with that whole of which it is a part. You may break the golden chain, and derange it's beautiful contexture; but the links are the same precious metal still. You will find in every sentence some useful maxim or example, for the conduct of life, or some special consolation under it's trials. In this we may discover the admirable mercy, as well as wisdom, of the spirit that inspired the scriptures. They were designed for general usefulness; but the generality of mankind, either from incapacity or inattention, cannot discern the beauty, scope, and connection of a long argument or chain of reasoning, which the subject rendered sometimes necessary.—Yet even then, every single sentence is forcible and pointed, and calculated both by the plainness of the

language, and the importance of the subject, to lay hold of the memory, and improve the heart. In the composition of our sermons, we should study the same simplicity and clearness. Our subjects are, or ought to be, almost always plain. Our language, too, like a transparent stream, should at once reveal our meaning, and be as perspicuous as possible. Every word which we utter should be understood by the most ignorant and unlearned of our hearers; and the sense of the whole, "like the light of the sun, should "obtrude itself upon his eyes, not only without any "pains to search for it, but, as it were, whether he "will or not*." *Except ye utter words easy to be understood*, says the apostle, *ye speak into the air*. Your people, or at least the bulk of them, will reap no benefit, and you cannot be surprised, if, after frequent disappointments, they should attend but seldom.

It is necessary, therefore, my brethren, to put ourselves in the place of the lowest of our hearers; to consider that what is clear and familiar to us, may be dark and strange to him; and to say nothing that is not level to his capacity. In doing this, we may easily avoid all words that are mean and vulgar, so as to make our discourse no less useful to the highest than the lowest understanding; for the matter that will suit the one will equally suit the other; they have both the same exigencies. If they had not, the poor and ignorant have always the first claim, for they generally make the greatest number. From both, it is true, we might obtain more admiration and applause by following a different course. But our business is not to get applause to ourselves, but glory to God, and good to our people. Our business is to make men think, not of our eloquence, but of their own souls? to attend, not to our fine

* Quinctil. l. 8.

language, but to their own everlasting interest. One of the ancient fathers used to weep when his hearers applauded his sermon. "Would to God," said he, "they had rather gone away silent and thoughtful!" He considered serious and deep reflection on their own state to be the best effect of a discourse upon the hearers, and the best commendation of the preacher. That great monarch, who so finely complimented the eloquent bishop of Clermont, seems to have been of the same opinion. "Father," said he, "I have "heard many great orators, and heard them with "pleasure; but for you, whenever I hear you, I go "away displeased with myself, for I see more of my "own character."

Do we wish, my brethren, that our sermons should produce the like effect? Then let us not expect it from the ostentation of learning, or from the parade of eloquence. Our fine flowing sentences, and well-turned periods few will be able to follow to the end, or to understand; and if they should, will be little the better. The ear, indeed, may be pleased, but the mind and heart will be as ignorant and unreformed as ever. Therefore let your words be all plain and clear, your sentences generally short, or, if at any time somewhat long, never dark or perplexed. Never be careless, neither be artificial.—Never multiply words without cause; for they will only serve to hide your meaning, perhaps to impair it; as the fruit is seldom abundant where the foliage is too luxuriant. Never show your learning at the expence of perspicuity, nor use any ornament at the expence of utility. Rhetorical flourishes, if used at all, must be scattered with a very sparing hand. "Like red and yellow flowers in corn, they may be "agreeable to the man who comes only for amuse-"ment, but prejudicial to him that would reap the "profit." Yes, my brethren, these are no better than tares which the enemy sows among the good

seed, however different may be the opinion of some gay preachers, who would rather recommend themselves than their Saviour, and who would rather have their hearers admire their language than take their counsel. I know that such fine preachers, full of their own importance, and buoyed up with the pride of what they suppose to be superior talents, will be apt, with the poet, to

"Scorn the vile mob, which knows not right from wrong*."

But it should be remembered, that those poor people, who make the bulk of most congregations, though no judges of fine composition, have precious souls; and that these souls can never be saved by preaching the gospel to them in an unknown tongue.

The best preacher, by which I mean the most useful, is always the most plain†. "I love," says the archbishop of Cambray, "a plain, serious preacher, who speaks for my sake, and not for his own; who seeks my salvation, and not his own vain glory." It is true, such a preacher may not always have praise from men, who often admire most what they least understand‡. But his words, aimed directly at the heart, will take effect when those of the learned declaimer, like arrows shot in the air, will pass

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* Rejice degenerem vulgum, nil lucis habentem. VIDA. And Robinson on Claude.

† Optimi ad vulgus hi sunt concionatores, qui pueriliter, populariter, et simplicissime docent. LUTHER.

‡ Docente te in ecclesia, non clamor populi, sed gemitus, suscitetur; lacrymæ auditorum laudes tuæ sint. Verba volvere, et celeritate dicendi apud imperitum vulgus admirationem facere, indoctorum hominum est. Nil tam facile quam vilem plebiculam et indoctam concione linguæque volubilitate decipire; quia quicquid non intelligit plus miratur. JEROM. ad Nepot.

over the heads of his hearers, and only amuse their ears with an empty tinkling sound*. To see a pastor harangue in this manner, when

"The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,"

is one of the most pitiable scenes in nature. It puts one in mind of the fabled misery of Tantalus, whose parched lips were not permitted to taste of that stream which perpetually murmured before him. Such a preacher may perhaps be complimented as a deep reasoner and an able logician; but, alas! this is a poor equivalent for starving the souls of his hearers, by neglecting to give them that plain and nourishing *bread which came down from heaven*. How different was the conduct of the great reformer Luther! In the life of this learned man, written by Adams, there are inserted some of those homely rhymes which he composed for the sake of the vulgar. "For these beggarly ballads," says a late writer†, "Luther may receive a greater reward at the last "day, than for whole shelves of learned *folios*. Va- "nity will make a man speak and write learnedly; "but piety only can prevail on a good scholar to sim- "plify his speech for the sake of the vulgar. Such "a preacher, however contemptible now, will one "day have a name above every name, whether it be "philosopher, poet, orator, or whatever is most re- "vered among mankind." And if we, my brethren, wish this honour to be ours, we must study not

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* Suprema illi concionandi lex erat populi salus. Neque id ille in concione egit ut auditorum aures inani verborum tinnitu deliniret; sed ut res utilissimas suaviter in illorum pectora insinuaret; ut ad auditorum captum, sermonem suum attemperaret; eorumque adeo fidem ac pietatem unice promoveret. *Vita Laur. Chardelon.*

† Robinson on Claude's Essay.

so much to please, as to profit; not so much to charm the ear, as to feed the soul and mend the heart. And to encourage us to this, we shall generally, if not always, find, that *he* will please his hearers most, who makes it least his aim.

Above all, "if we would attain to the true stile "and eloquence of sermons, we must cherish an "inward sense of the importance and excellency "of sacred truths, and cultivate a strong feeling of "all the virtues. For when our own hearts have once "felt the warmth of divine things, it will be easy for "us to transfuse it into the breasts of others. The "inward feelings of a good heart have a natural "eloquence accompanying them, which can never "be equalled by laboured and studied ornament. "The heart, really and justly moved, never fails to "dictate a language plain and easy, full of natural and "continued vigour, which has nothing in it soft, "nothing languishing; all is nervous and strong, "and does not so much please the ear, as ravish and "fill the heart. Further, let it be taken notice of "as a thing of the utmost importance, that sincerity "alone, and a real desire to instruct and persuade, "will banish all affectation, either of sentiment or "language. This is evident from the conduct of "mankind in circumstances in which they are in "earnest. For instance, a wise, virtuous, and pious "parent, when he has a near prospect of entering "into an invisible world, and only so much strength "remaining as to enable him to give his last and dy-"ing instructions to his beloved children who stand "weeping around him; will he study to express him-"self with artificial eloquence, and industriously "search for glittering ornament? Surely he will "not. Or, if he should, how absurd, nay, how "shocking and monstrous would his conduct appear "to every impartial spectator? The application is "easy, and there is no occasion for insisting on it.

" Allow me then to close this part of the subject " with observing, that this divine eloquence cannot " be acquired merely by human learning and skill in " the choice and arrangement of words, but by a " powerful feeling of what is great and good, produ- " ced in us by the holy spirit of God*."

* Prin. Leechman's Syn. Ser.

## LECTURE XIX.

*That a Minister of the Gospel should attend much to his Enunciation and Action in the Delivery of his Sermons.*

THE best judges among the ancients have represented *delivery* as the principal part of an orator's province. They tell us, that it is not of so much moment *what* our compositions are, as *how* they are delivered. And, therefore, they scruple not to affirm, that an indifferent discourse, properly set off, will have a greater effect upon an audience, than the finest composition, when destitute of this advantage. Much, therefore, of a preacher's success and power of persuasion will depend on his delivery. All his preparative labour and study are subservient to this end, and will only have so much value as this will stamp on them.

——" This is the last key stone,
" That makes the arch. The rest, that there were put,
" Are nothing, till this comes to bind and shut."

With what may be requisite to a good delivery, I suppose, my brethren, you are already acquainted, so that I need not enter much into the subject. I shall only suggest a few hints, and call you to a diligent cultivation of the art, which has no difficulty that may not be conquered by application ; for it is on all hands allowed, that though a poet must be born one, an orator may be made*. The first requisite, then, is to speak so as to be heard with ease

* Nascitur poeta, fit orator.

by the most distant of your audience, otherwise to them you speak in vain. You are not, however, to go to the other extreme, and strain your voice more than is necessary; for this would have the appearance of being painful to yourself, and would, therefore, be uneasy and disgustful to others. To speak audibly enough, you must observe, that it is not at all so necessary to speak loud as to be full, distinct and deliberate, and to keep your voice from sinking too much when a sentence is near a close. It is better to begin the following period a degree lower than you concluded the former.

The next requisite to a good delivery, is a proper and graceful pronunciation, including the just use of pauses, tones, and emphases. This part of delivery is best learned from attending to such as speak the language with most propriety, whether in conversation or in public. You must avoid imitating any particular person's voice or manner, which would make you appear affected, if not awkward. You must avoid all monotony, whether it be that of pronouncing every word with uniform languor, or uniform force and energy; for both would equally tire and fatigue the attention of the hearers. You must avoid singing or chaunting, which will disgust all but the very weakest, and cannot, surely, make them in the smallest degree the wiser or the better. On the contrary, by diverting the attention from the subject to the sound, they are made listless, or perhaps lulled asleep, as children, by a song. This is the natural effect of a sing-song or cant, and perhaps the true reason that makes it (by relieving the attention) so acceptable to the lowest and weakest people and so much practised by weak and designing speakers. To say the best of it, it is but making sound pass instead of sense; "just as cripples get on horse-"back," said an ancient orator, "in order to con-"ceal their lameness." Setting this trick aside, then

address your people as you would do a friend, when you would inform or persuade him in a matter of vast moment, only with more deliberativeness, energy and warmth, in proportion to the numbers you may have occasion to speak to.

A third requisite to a good delivery, is proper gesture and action, that you may not offend the eye, any more than the ear, in your preaching. By proper gesture and action, I mean such as will appear natural, fit easy on the speaker, please the hearer, and suit the subject. In your gesture and action, you should avoid being light, affected, or theatrical. The posture of the body should not change every moment, nor should it be long in the same position. The features of the face should not be any way distorted, the mouth writhed, the lips bit or licked, the shoulders shrugged, nor the belly thrust out. All coughing, spitting, hemming, and the like, should be avoided as much as possible. The head should be kept in it's natural and erect position. It should not be without any motion, nor always moving; but should gently turn, sometimes to the one side, sometimes to the other, and then return to it's natural posture. It should be on the same side with the action of the hands, except in expressing aversion. The eyes should be directed always to some of the audience, turning softly and respectfully from one side to another, and looking the hearers decently in the face, as in ordinary conversation. In appeals to heaven, however, or in speaking of heaven, they should turn up; and in speaking of earth or hell, turn down. The hands should seldom be altogether idle. They should correspond in their motion to each other; and if only one be used, it may rather be the right. Their action should correspond to the subject, uniting or separating, raising or depressing, as that requires. They should never be lifted above the eyes, and seldom higher than the shoulders. The arms

should not extend very far from the sides, and neither elbow should rest upon the pulpit.

To these observations on gesture and action, I must add one or two cautions. You are to avoid overacting, which is worse than no action at all. You are to avoid an uniform warmth and energy throughout; it is improper when you explain and inform; you must reserve it till you begin to persuade and to address the passions. Even then you must spread no more sail than your helm can easily command, lest you should not be able to rule your spirit in "the storm and tempest of passion." You must especially take care to warm and rise gradually, and never go faster or farther than you find your hearers disposed to follow you; for if they are cold while you appear to be warm, they will be offended and disgusted; especially if you have warmed yourself by mere vehemence of speech or action, and not by moving the affections by rational and solid argument.

Upon the whole, you must endeavour in the delivery of your sermons, to make every expression of voice and gesture, of speech and action, unite in two general characters essentially requisite. These are solemnity and earnestness, or gravity and warmth. Solemnity and gravity suit the nature of your subject and office, and earnestness and warmth are necessary to impress and persuade your hearers. An eternity of happiness and misery which is depending, renders both of them highly becoming. In the pulpit therefore, be always solemn, always earnest; at times vehement, never violent. Even in ordinary conversation, you must guard against transgressing the rules of gesture and pronunciation, and study to acquire a correct, graceful, and proper manner. Thus your delivery will appear natural, without any thing in it constrained or forced. Above all things, you must, as we have more than once observed already, be at the greatest pains to cultivate the strongest feelings o-

religion; then, from the abundance of the heart, the mouth readily speaketh.

Yet, after all, the difficulty of acquitting ourselves well in this department of our office, is exceeding great; and even good men fail in it so often, that we must cry out, *Who is sufficient for these things?* The excellencies which must combine, before a man can succeed or arrive at eminence in this art, are so many, that it is no wonder that they should be found in one man so seldom. A good figure, a graceful manner, a full and pleasant voice, an expressive countenance, a pious soul and a feeling heart, must all be joined to much sense, much learning, much study and and a good life, to make the sacred orator thoroughly furnished for this part of his office. In this part of our office, therefore, we should be more particularly careful to implore the divine assistance to bless our best endeavours, from the deepest conviction that *our sufficiency is not of ourselves.* If Pericles, who was said to thunder and lighten in his harangues, never ventured to speak in public in Athens, till he had first prayed to the gods to assist him, how much more should a minister of the gospel, when he goes forth on a business of such importance, implore the divine aid by fervent prayer.

O God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, and who turnest them, as rivers of water, whithersoever thou pleaseth, I go forth on this day in thy name; send, O send, prosperity! I go forth on the errand of thy Son, my Master, to persuade the souls for whom he died to be reconciled to thee, through his blood, and be saved: O send, I beseech thee, for his sake, *send good speed this day!* O let not my wandering sheep be lost, let not my prodigal children perish! Let not the blood of the Son of God, so far as it concerns them, be shed to no purpose! O send the spirit of thy light and truth to guide thy servant, who goes forth on this day in search of them; send the

spirit of thy presence to enable him to bring them home! Thou hast made the mouth and the tongue, and from thee alone is the power of persuasion; give, therefore, a word in season, that sinners may hear thy servant's voice, and obey it! Then shall this be a day of gladness in heaven; and, "The dead's "alive, the lost is found," shall be the song of ten thousand angels. Transporting thought! it makes thy servant go in his way rejoicing. O may it please the MOST HIGH to send the spirit he hath promised with me, and own the weakest and most unworthy of his servants on this day, so as to make him the instrument in his hand to save souls. Then will the excellency of the power appear indeed to have been of God. Yes; the power and the glory for ever shall be thine, O Father of Mercies! who hast no pleasure in the death of sinners. Take pity, therefore, on my poor perishing flock, and save them. O make bare thine arm, and let them feel this as a day of thy power on their souls! Art not thou he that did wonders of mercy and of love of old? Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and thy mercies? Are they restrained? O may the people to whom I speak on this day, feel, from their own experience, that *thy mercy endureth for ever!* May the Redeemer ride triumphantly in the chariot of the gospel on this day; may the gates of brass be broken before him, and the bars of iron be cut asunder; and may the people to whom I speak own that he hath prevailed! May this be the day of ransom to their souls, and may they with glad hosannahs welcome the Son of David! O thou Holy Spirit! come; come with thy enlightening, convincing, converting and sanctifying power. Impress the souls of sinners with a sense of their guilt, and give them a clear sight of their danger. Bind the stubborn will to the obedience of the gospel, and make this people willing in the day of thy power. O thou who didst

brood on the face of the deep, and bring light and order out of darkness and confusion, a beautiful creation out of an indigested chaos, work with the same almighty energy on the hearts of the people, to whom I am about to speak, that they may be created anew, after the image of him who made them! Breathe, breathe on these dry bones, that they may live; quicken these dead souls, that all heaven may rejoice, and the first born sons of creation unite with these new-born babes, in singing praises to him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!

Yes, my brethren, in this part of our duty, after imploring the divine assistance, we should conjure up all our spirit, summon forth all the energy which our souls are possessed of, and study to make our manner, as well as our matter, keep alive the attention, and impress the hearts of our hearers. We should make it appear, that our business is important, and that we are indeed in earnest. Our inward concern should break forth through every pore, and without any thing light, theatrical, or extravagant, give life and animation to every tone of our voice, and to every feature of our countenance. Then only may we hope to impress others, when they see that we are deeply impressed ourselves. "If you wish me "to weep, you must first weep yourself," is an aphorism as true as it is old. It is indeed a thing altogether inexcusable in a minister of the gospel to be unaffected and cold, when he is preaching the doctrines of salvation. A concern for the souls of men, and a sense of his accountableness to that Great Being in whose work he is engaged, ought, if he has any feeling at all, to inspire him with such awe and solemnity, and zeal and earnestness of soul, as cannot fail to be observed by his hearers. And wherever these are discovered, their effects are obvious. The passion runs, by secret sympathy, from soul to soul;

and the interested audience feel all the emotion of the preacher.

Of how much importance it is for a speaker to feel what he says, will plainly appear from a view of the different success of Tertullus and St. Paul, when they both pleaded before the Roman governor.—Tertullus must have been eminent in his profession, otherwise he had not been chosen by the high priest and elders as their pleader, upon an occasion which they deemed of such importance, that they themselves took a long journey in order to be present at the trial. Yet this famous orator, with all his eloquence, made no impression upon Felix; whereas St. Paul moved him, alarmed him, and made him tremble. Why? The one, a mere hireling, spoke what he did not feel, and substituted artificial instead of natural eloquence. The other felt, deeply felt, all he said; and therefore made others feel also. He spoke the words of truth, the earnest, unaffected language of the heart, and therefore he prevailed*.

Notwithstanding this instructive example, it is matter of deep regret, that most preachers are rather imitators of Tertullus than of the apostle. The eloquence at which they generally aim, is rather laboured and artificial, than natural and easy; and the very tone of voice with which they speak is too often affected; and therefore must appear sometimes ridiculous, always awkward and unnatural. To guard against this fault, observe your tone and manner on ordinary occasions, when you are most interested and most in earnest. The same is that which you ought to have in the pulpit. If you are in earnest, it is what nature will dictate; and that will always be the most striking, as well as the most pleasing.

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* Atterbury's Sermons.

To feel and be in earnest is the first requisite in the art of speaking. How eloquent is the most illiterate when he pleads his own cause, and tells his own grievances! To him, therefore, who feels and is in earnest, no artifice or imitation is necessary. Nature will spontaneously dictate what neither art nor imitation can attain. But if imitate you must, it will be of service, in acquiring this, and every other excellency, to copy the best examples. Consider then how earnestly Christ spoke, when it was said of him, *He is beside himself.* Consider how earnestly the apostle spoke, when mockers alledged they were *full of new wine.* Consider how Paul spoke before Agrippa, Felix and the court of Areopagus. If you will imitate, let these be your models; they and nature are the same. But he who is at leisure to attend to an artificial tone of voice, or an artificial stile of language, discovers his indifference to his subject, and would be considered as acting a strange part in any other business of importance, although custom has made it so common in preaching, as to make us, in some measure, forget the impropriety. Take the following instance to illustrate our observation. "My "neighbour had a son whom he tenderly loved, and "of whom he had conceived the fondest hopes. But, "in the dangerous season of youth, sinners entice "him, pleasure allures him, and his father's counsels "and reproofs offend him. Impatient of restraint, "he leaves his father's house, with a resolution to re- "turn no more. In this distressful moment I found "the fond parent, under a solitary tree, sorrowful "and disconsolate above measure. He tells me the "cause of his grief, and I offer my endeavours to "bring back his son. He bids me go, and God be "with me. But, in order to accomplish the desire of "his heart, what further directions do you think he "gave me? Did he say, "Have a care that you "arrange your arguments properly, and that you

" speak to my son in mood and figure ; for I taught " him *logic?* Have a care also, that you put your " words in the best order, and that you turn your " periods artificially and nicely ; for I taught my " boy *rhetoric ?* And take care, especially, that you " pronounce aright, and commit no slip in grammar, " lest you offend his ear ; for I have made him a " *grammarian ?* No : instead of speaking in this un- " natural manner, he only cries, Go, go and bring " back my child ; set your heart and soul, I beseech " you, on this important business, as you wish to " please me." Even so, my brethren, let us preach the gospel, and execute the commission upon which our Master sends us.

Thus, my brethren, let us be in earnest, and our hearers cannot be unconcerned. Let us never consider a sermon as a task, and they will never consider it as a burden. Let us speak with zeal, and they will listen with attention. And, surely, if any thing in the world deserves earnestness and zeal, it is this. What! are heaven and hell just at hand, and are they such glorious and dreadful realities as they are represented in the gospel ? Are sinners despising the one, and sleeping on the brink of the other ? And are we sent by God to awaken them, and, as it were, to compel them to flee from wrath, and be saved ? And shall not so important a charge engross all our attention ? Why do we not hasten, why do we not flee, to pluck sinners as brands from the everlasting burnings ? Why do we not pray more fervently ; why do we not preach more zealously ; why do we not lay out our whole life, and soul, and strength, in this great work in which we are engaged ? What ! is the salvation of immortal souls, for whom Christ died, worthy of no greater pains ? Is the honour and interest of our glorious Master worthy of no greater exertion ? Shall the men of the world be more industrious in pursuit of gains and pleasures, than we in seeking the glory of Christ, and the sal-

vation of the souls of our people? God forbid! We are on matters of life and death, of *eternal life* and *eternal death*. We pray, we preach, we labour for ETERNITY. Surely then it becomes us to do this with all our might, and not to trifle with immortal souls, which are just on the confines of death, and on the threshold of an eternal world.

It is the observation of an author who has never been suspected of enthusiasm, that "the damnation "of one man is an infinitely greater evil in the uni- "verse, than the subversion of a thousand millions "of kingdoms*." On the other hand, "the eternal "salvation of one soul is of greater importance, and "big with greater events, than the temporal salva- "tion of an whole kingdom, though it were for the "space of ten thousand ages; because, there will "come up a point, an instant in eternity, when that "one soul shall have existed as long as all the in- "dividuals of a whole kingdom, ranged in close "succession, will on the whole have existed in the "space of ten thousand ages†.

Whoever attends to such considerations as these, will hardly need to be told, that a preacher's sole aim and end should be to glorify God by saving souls; and that he ought to pursue this end with all possible zeal and earnestness of spirit. "He preached with "such spirit and devotion (said the emperor Charles "V. of Ochius, one of the first reformers), as might "almost serve to make the very stones weep." With the same spirit should all of us preach, my brethren, if we attended to the weight of our calling. Our errand is of infinite importance. The issue of it, I say again, is eternal happiness or everlasting misery. It therefore becomes us to use every effort, in order to make souls feel their dangerous state, and

* HUME, *Three Essays on Suicide, immortality of the Soul,* &c.

† Doddridge.

rouse them to a solicitude about their salvation. For this purpose, let us awaken all our spirit in our sermons. Let us try every solemn and forcible form of address to the hearts and consciences of men. Let us use every endeavour to kindle their souls to a zealous concern for religion, and to the practice of true godliness. "Never had orators a finer opportunity of "being heard with attention. Never were subjects "more susceptible of a grave, majestic, and pathetic "eloquence, than those themes which we treat of. "We have the most powerful motives to work "with, and the most powerful passions to work up "on. We have an eternity of glory to promise, "and an eternity of misery to threaten. We are sent "by a master, in whose presence all the kings in the "universe are but as the small drop in the bucket, "or the dust in the balance*." We may address all the feelings, and all the passions of mankind. By the terrors of the Lord we may persuade them; by their own interest allure them. We may set the blessed God before them in all the splendours of his majesty, and ask, Who would not fear and glorify so great a KING: We may lead them to Mount Sinai, and proclaim the law of God in their hearing, amid thundering and lightnings, blackness and darkness, tempest and the sound of trumpet, and ask, who would not obey it? We may lead them to Calvary, and show them the son of God, bleeding and expiring on the cross, the sacrifice of a guilty world, and ask Who would not love him? We may display before their eyes the triumph of his death, resurrection, and ascension, with all the powers of earth and hell subdued. We may bid them mount along with us to the regions of the blessed, and there show them the pure joys and the ineffable glories of that happy place. We may anticipate the solemnities of the last day,

* Saurin.

sound the archangel's trumpet in their ears, show them the dead rising out of their graves, and the living in an instant changed. We may shew them the SON *of Man* coming in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels; the elements melting, and heaven and earth on fire. We may take them to the bottomless abyss, and show them the horrible mansions of the damned; the worm that never dieth, and the fire that shall never be quenched. Is it possible to conceive an orator in circumstances more advantageous, especially when he is encouraged to hope for the aid of the divine Spirit to bless and to give effect to his endeavours. Possessed, therefore, of such glorious advantages, let us duly improve them. Let us exert every faculty, let us wield every engine. Let us be faithful and zealous, and active, and bold, that, through the mercy of God in Christ, we may save our own souls, and those that hear us.

## LECTURE XX.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should take pains to repeat, and not read, his Sermons.*

THE practice of reading sermons, which is not of a long standing in this country, and which is not yet tolerated in any other, is extremely hurtful to the interests of religion; for no sermon can have the same energy or effect when read, as it has when spoken or repeated. It may be more correct in point of composition; but this advantage is obtained at the expence of animation, and therefore at the expence of usefulness. For the plainest speaker, with animation, affects us more than the greatest orator could do by reading, which hardly admits of any animation. If Cicero and Demosthenes had only read their harangues, they had never produced those wonderful effects, which we read of, on the minds of their hearers, who would have, in that case, heard them, as we read them, with some admiration, but no emotion. If St. Paul had only read a discourse on righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, Felix, we may presume, had never trembled. Nay, if HE who *spake as never man did*, had read his sacred discourses, instead of *closing the book* and preaching, it is probable (with reverence be it said) that this eulogy had not been bestowed, and that perfection in eloquence had made no part of the sublime character of our Master. If, therefore, reading, instead of repeating, could have thus deprived the discourses of a Cicero, Demosthenes, St. Paul, or even of the SON of GOD himself, of so much of their effect and excellence, is it

not certain, that it must be of the utmost prejudice to our very inferior sermons ?

It is universally allowed, that a great part of eloquence consists in action. When the ancient orator was asked what was the first requisite in his art, he answered, Action. And when asked what was the second and third, he still answered, Action, action. If action then be the essence of eloquence, the man who only reads his discourses, however excellent, can hardly pass for eloquent, or lay claim to the appellation of orator, since action and reading are almost incompatible terms.

There is indeed a way of reading with a propriety and ease, which may in some degree resemble speaking. But the resemblance at best is very faint and distant. Our very tone of voice, when we speak, is different from what it is when we read. The first is the natural sound of our organs of speech ; the last was acquired in learning to read, and still savours of that coldness and indifference with which we then expressed what we did not understand. When we speak, our words seem to be the immediate dictates of the heart, and will more easily find their way to the hearts of others. They will also be uttered with more spirit and freedom, than if our eyes were fixed on a paper, which would further deprive our words of those significant looks with which they might be accompanied ; the powerful language of the eyes, so full of expression, force, and persuasion. Reading, too, hinders us from observing the countenances of our hearers, which would be no less animating to us than ours to them. It hinders us from observing, whether they attend to us, whether they understand us, or whether they are moved ; and, consequently, from accommodating ourselves always to their circumstances. In short, it is altogether incompatible with true oratory and action, and so much alters the nature of a sermon from what it would be,

if repeated, that it can never have the same effect upon an audience.

Hence, the bar, the senate, and popular assemblies, on every other occasion, disallow so much of reading, that in none of them has it ever yet been practised or indulged: so that it's being introduced into the pulpit only, and continued there, will be found, I fear, to reflect little honour on our predecessors or ourselves. It seems to argue a want of care, earnestness and sincerity; for who, in advising a friend very earnestly, would think of writing his advice, or taking with him notes, out of which he should read his counsel.

Upon the whole, my brethren, it is beyond a doubt that it would contribute much to the usefulness of our sermons, if they were repeated, instead of being read. The wonderful success of the first preachers of Christianity, and of the first reformers in latter times, has been often imputed to the novelty of their doctrines. But I am apt to think, that much of it may be also ascribed to the zeal, animation, and action, of the preachers; as we have known a few sacred orators in our own days, whose sermons, thus delivered, were attended with a degree of success almost equally astonishing. The writings of a Whitefield and Wesley show, that their strength lay in this; and that if they had been readers, they must have been as weak as other men.

Indeed, the practice of reading has in it something that looks so like indolence and indifference, that it is, in appearance, at least, ill suited to that boldness and zeal which men should expect in a messenger come from God. A man who speaks in the name of Christ, as his ambassador and representative in the world, might be expected to speak with such a dignity and freedom, as would manifest his own inward concern, as well as the awful and infinite consequences of his message. It might be expected,

that he should speak from the fulness of his heart; and that, with all possible earnestness of spirit, he would rouse and excite his people to prepare for death, judgment, and eternity, and to look, without delay, for the glorious appearing of the Son of God. But if, instead of this, he bows motionless over a paper, and only, through that medium, speaks to his hearers, we are tempted to suspect, if not a want of capacity, at least a want of concern; for every considerate person will judge according to the appearance before his eyes, and not according to the prevalency of custom; and will, therefore, reckon this as an instance of indolence and awkwardness which has no parallel in the affairs of men. The minds of the hearers, too, from a principle of assimilation, are apt, on such occasions, to be seized with a languor of spirits, somewhat analogous to the minister's indolence; and though we must, in charity, believe, that the spirits of both are more seriously engaged than their outward frame would indicate, yet the practice has naturally a manifest tendency to introduce a cold and lifeless face on the awful concerns of our immortal part; and ought, therefore, as much as lieth in us, to be always avoided.

The preacher who, cold and inanimate as a statue, slavishly reads his sermons, however well penned, will always find those sermons attended with very moderate success. He may be compared to those worms which seem to glow and give some light in the dark, but have no warmth. He may convey some knowledge to the understanding, but no emotion at all to the heart. "When such a man would "reprove sinners, he only reads to them a chiding. "When he would awaken them from their lethargy, "and pluck them as brands out of the burning, he "reads to them some words of pity, or perhaps a *use* "*of terror*; and if he would lament over their impen-

"itence and approaching ruin, he can do no more "than read to them a chapter of lamentation. A "paper, with the most pathetic lines written upon it, "has neither fear, nor hope, nor compassion, nor "zeal. It is conscious of no design, nor has any so- "licitude about the success; and a mere reader, who "coldly tells his people what his paper says, appears "to be as void of all these necessary qualifications "as his paper is. Let us see if such conduct would "not appear to be the strangest indifference in mat- "ters of less moment. The steward of a great "lord was much displeased with the servants "under him, for some instance of gross mis- "conduct. The occasion of his displeasure was "great and just; but he had not the spirit of reproof. "He complained to his lord; but his lord desired to "be excused from interfering with the province of "his steward, and told him, that if the servants un- "der him were culpable, he must sharply reprove "them. Alas! said he, I cannot chide; however, "to show my resentment, if you will write down a "chiding, I will go immediately and read it to them. "The steward read, and the servants smiled*."

You may, therefore, hold it as a certain truth, my brethren, that the more and the oftener you repeat, if you are not able to do it entirely and always, you will be not only the more agreeable, but the more useful and persuasive preachers. Your memory, too, more than any faculty, will improve by exercise; insomuch that what was difficult at first will soon be easy. Till that is the case, you can take short notes of the method, or principal heads and leading thoughts, which will readily suggest the matter you had premeditated and prepared under them, and in a great measure enable you to preserve the freedom and ease of one who speaks. And when you are

* See Watts's Miscell.

thus sure of your matter, you will never be at a loss for plain and proper words to express it, especially if you are much interested, and indeed in earnest. If you are not, no preparation whatever will make you eloquent. After you shall have acquired a facility of expression, and some boldness and presence of mind by practice, you will perhaps speak with more freedom and ease in this manner, than if you had committed every word to paper and to memory beforehand. For in the freedom and warmth of preaching, a thousand things will spontaneously occur, which you could never have thought of in the closet, and which will have more nature, eloquence, and force, than any thing previously prepared. By this, however, I would not be understood as recommending to any one to trust to such occurrences. It is best to prepare as if you did not expect them; at least, till you have acquired the habit of expressing your thoughts with ease, and even with correctness.

Habit, habit is every thing. Choose that course of life which is best, said the philosopher, and custom will soon make it easy, and even pleasant. Therefore young preachers, especially, should accustom themselves, from the first, to repeat their sermons; a practice to which they would soon be reconciled, and find by no means difficult. I know, I feel, that when a different practice has been, in any measure, indulged, it is not easily corrected. Corrected, however, by perseverance and pains, it may be; and the pleasure and advantages redounding from the effort, will, as in the case of repentance, more than compensate for the labour. Of labour, indeed we should make no account in the exercise of our sacred calling. Our greatest honour is to be spent in such noble service. We have a Master who will reward us with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, if we are faithful and diligent; or punish us everlastingly, if we are inactive and careless. And

let us remember, that even in the lifeless performance of the duties belonging to a character so public and important as ours, and a mere negative virtue, may be as hurtful to the great interests of mankind, as the positive crimes of other men. The stagnant pool may be as noxious as the bursting torrent. None of us, therefore, can be certain but negligence or indifference in us may be followed by as severe punishments, as the crimes of others, in this or in another world. This will appear highly probable, if we consider the remote consequence of our indolence, to give it no worse a name. For if we allow the impressions of God and religion to wear out of the minds of our people, by our indolence in duty, and our careless manner of handling the word of God, not only does the present generation pass unprepared to eternity, but several others may pass after them, before these impressions can be fixed in the minds of their successors. This thought should powerfully engage us to be at all possible pains in preparing for the pulpit. And, to give this preparation it's full effect, we must never forget that we ought to spend a great part of our time in secret and fervent prayer, for obtaining the direction, aid, and blessing of God upon our labours; for obtaining much of the presence of his Holy Spirit, and a lively sense of his grace, upon our souls. When the impressions of divine things are thus deep and strong, and growing upon our minds, we shall clearly perceive the necessity of entering into the spirit of our ministry, and not satisfy ourselves with reading a cold formal exercise set to the measure of half an hour. It were a miracle indeed, if a reader could inform, move and persuade his hearers, by means so unlikely, and in a period of time so circumscribed. Prepare and deliver as you ought, and so as to engage, interest, and keep alive the attention of the audience; and then as you may learn from those who attend the theatre, a longer time will appear to be short, and nowise tedious.

When I suggest that sermons, when they are in other respects what they ought, might be somewhat longer too, I am sensible that the torrent of the fashion at present is against me, and that it would be a vain attempt to stem it's tide. But I know also that in proportion as this fashion of reading and shortening sermons has gained ground, the interests of religion have declined. Such therefore, as wish to be useful to souls, will walk in the good old way, and study to approve themselves to God and to conscience. They will at the same time study to avoid prolixity, concentre their ideas, and speak to the purpose. Without this they would only disgust by speaking long. For many speak long only because they want the art of arranging their ideas clearly, and expressing them succinctly. The shorter the harangues of such, they are so much the better. But when ministers speak, as they ought, in a clear, strong and connected manner, I would not have them cut short at a precise minute, but do justice to the subject, and to souls, if a few more sands should run. To induce them to this, and to engage them to speak with a becoming energy and animation, they ought to remember, that they speak in the presence of God and angels, as well as of men. Those glorious, though invisible beings, who minister to the heirs of salvation, are certainly present when the words of that salvation are preached. It was probably with a view of inculcating this truth on the minds of the worshippers, and of inspiring them with reverence and awe in places of worship, that the Jewish tabernacle and the Jewish temple were in a manner lined with the figures of cherubs. Accordingly, we find in the New Testament, angels putting men in mind of sacred truths, which, on former occasions, they heard delivered to them*.

* Compare Luke xxiv. 6, 7, with Matth. xvii. 23.

"I have been told by a certain person," says Chrysostom,* "and I well believe it, that he had seen a "glorious vision of an innumerable company of an- "gels leaning forward at the altar, and listening, as "soldiers, around their general." What an enlivening consideration must this be to the christian preacher! Thousands of the host of heaven surround him; and, while he improves one order of beings, he regales another; while he instructs men, he gives joy to angels. Is it possible that such a man can act his part in the pulpit with indifference or coldness, or confine himself to the reading of a paper; I had almost said to the repetition of any words previously conned? Is it possible that, in performing the functions of his office, his thoughts should not carry him heavenwards, and as it were, transport him to the regions of glory?

I conclude this subject, my brethren, with observing again, that the best rule for acquitting ourselves properly in our public appearances is, by proper meditation and study, to make ourselves fully masters of our subject, and then to have always our hearts deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of that service in which we are engaged. This sense, indeed, we are apt to lose, when, by long use, our office is become familiar to us. It is proper, therefore, to refresh our minds frequently with the view which we had of our ministry, when we first entered upon that sacred office. How solemn, how awful a thing did it then appear, to enter upon the most august office on earth, to stand in the room of Christ, and to be the messengers of his love to those souls for whom he died! But familiarity may have weakened this sense, and long use may have wore it off in a great degree. So when the high priest and Levites first saw the tabernacle which Moses had constructed,

* De Sacerdotio.

the cloud which covered it, and the manifestation of the divine presence which surrounded it, they must have approached it with deep reverence and holy fear. But, in process of time, they became bolder, and at length profaned it, by offering strange fire. We run a similar risk of profaning the mysteries of our most holy religion, unless we frequently recollect the solemnity of our work, and the importance of our calling. Our holy office, like the ark of God of old, will either save or destroy, as we do or do not hold it in awe and reverence*.

* Compare 1 Sam. vi. with 2 Sam. vi.

## LECTURE XXI.

*That a minister of the gospel should be solicitous about the Success of his Labours.*

IT is the observation of a very pious divine, that he never knew any considerable success attending the brightest talents, or the most shining preachers, if those preachers had not a solicitous concern about the success of their ministrations. Should they be honoured even so far as to be made the means of planting the grace of God in the souls of men, yet still that grace is but a tender plant in a foreign and unfriendly soil, which it requires much care, and pains, and skill, to cherish. A faithful minister, will, therefore, have a due regard to every part of his work. Knowing the importance of preaching, he will make all the previous preparation in his power. He will not only store his memory, but impress his heart, with the truths of the gospel. He will particularly study to be *fervent in spirit*, when in public he is *serving the Lord*. And, after concluding the service of the temple, after lifting holy hands, and spreading them in benediction and prayer over his people, he will not think that his work is ended. He only changes the place of carrying it on, retiring from the temple to the closet, and there committing the success of his labours to his God. He knows, that though he plant with care, and water with tears, that it is God alone who can give the increase. Therefore, in the inmost recesses of devotion, his whole soul will be poured out before him, that he may obtain his blessing. Yes, my brethren, if we would be accounted faith-

ful ministers of Jesus, we must water the seed sown, not only with public, but also with secret prayer. We must plead with God importunately, that he would not suffer us to labour in vain, and to spend our strength for naught. Without this we might be likened to that foolish bird, the ostrich, which is said to lay her eggs in the sand, regardless of what may befal them. But to her, as it is said in the book of Job, God hath not given understanding. And we, my brethren, are equally void of understanding and fidelity, if we do not look, with a watchful eye and anxious heart, after the success of our ministrations. What should we think of the husbandman, who, after preparing his ground and sowing his seed, should take no further thought about it till the day of the harvest? Trifling harvest; trifling as his neglect appears, when compared with his, who, after sowing the seed of eternal happiness, shews no anxiety to see it spring. Or, what should we think of that ambassador, who, after delivering his message, though fully and faithfully, should then dismiss all anxiety about the success of his embassy, and regard not how he should speed in his master's service? Would we not deem such a careless ambassador unworthy of the high trust reposed in him? And must we not judge in the same manner of that ambassador of Christ, who, in his infinitely important business, acts the same careless part? How different was the conduct of Abraham's faithful servant, who, after delivering his message, would neither eat nor drink till he saw his master's business was like to do well? Such should be our solicitude about the success of that ministry of reconciliation, of which our Lord hath done us the honour to give us the charge. For, if we pay no regard to the souls of our hearers, but in those public exhibitions, which our duty indispensibly requires, we shall never see the fruit of our labour in the reformation of our people. If we

seek not, and use not, other occasions, and that daily, of conveying and confirming religious impressions, of recovering the fallen, refreshing the weary, and leading on the willing; if we neglect to warn, exhort, comfort, visit, and instruct, as exigencies may require, and as opportunity may offer; if we bear not their names and their cases in prayer before God, and, with unceasing solicitude, implore his blessing on our labours, how can we hope that God will give us the pleasure of seeing those labours prosper? How can we hope that he will perform to us his promise made to his faithful servants, of *being with them, putting his spirit upon them, and his word in their mouth*, and of making *Satan fall before them as lightning from heaven?* These blessings await only those who solicitously seek them.

O God and Father of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose name I have been speaking, and whose message I have been declaring, pardon the sins of my holy things, and prosper, for the sake of thy Son, the work, the important work, in which I have been engaged! Thy servant has been planting and watering, and now waits, at the foot of thy throne, for that blessing of thine, which only can give the increase. O let the dew of heaven alight on my garden, and the sun of righteousness shine on it! Or, if this be too bold a request for a worm utterly unworthy of thy least notice, do it for thy own great name's sake; honour thy own word; bless thy own ordinances; and glorify thy Son, and suffer not his blood to be shed, for this people, without effect! O may he see of the travail of his soul among them, and be satisfied! May the spirit which he hath purchased work powerfully among them! May he teach, convince, convert, sanctify, and seal them to the day of redemption! O why should these poor sheep perish, when an all-sufficient Saviour is provided! Is there no balm for them in Gilead,

is there no physician there? O may it appear that there is! Hear, heal, save! Let this be a day of thy power, on which they may be a willing people; a day which many of them may remember, as that on which they received a spiritual life, and were born again! Let this be a day on which the great and good Shepherd himself shall be said to have gone forth to seek the lost, and bring the wandering home! May this be a day on which he shall be said to have *fed this flock as a shepherd, to have gathered the Lambs with his arm and carried them in his bosom, and to have gently led those that are with young!* On this day, O my God! let the heavenly harps be strung in praise of thy redeeming love, and let rejoicing angels sing over the conversion of sinners! O hear the prayers of the church on earth, and fulfil the joy of the church in heaven, so shall the church, above and below, with one voice, praise thee; and so shall thy servant go on in his way rejoicing! O let not my Lord be angry, if his unworthy servant shall urge this request with persevering importunity; if I shall *never hold my peace, day nor night, and give thee no rest, till thou establish and make this people a praise on the earth!* For this purpose, let thy word this day preached, and the ministerial labour this day performed, be blessed to them! Let it be as the good seed that shall bring forth an hundred fold; and let thy good providence watch over it, that no enemy may sow tares among it! And now, O God, let not thy servant be as the husbandman who slept, but give him grace to watch and be faithful; and bless thou his labour, and give the increase! May the seed spring, grow, and ripen, through thy blessing, on his constant care! May it be kept till the great day of the harvest, bound in the bundle of life, and gathered in, by rejoicing angels into the garner of God! O my God, give me grace to be more faithful, and enable me to discharge

all the duties of my ministry! O *my* God, be the God of my people! *Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child; and let thy everlasting arms be underneath them!* O hear, for the sake of thy Son, whose name I make my supplication, through whose hands I desire to transmit it, and on whose intercession I rely, for procuring it thy acceptance. Amen.

## LECTURE XXII.

### *That a Minister of the Gospel should attend to the Daily Duties of his Office.*

### 1. CATECHISING.

WITH solicitude for success is naturally connected the most unremitting attention to daily duties. We ought never to forget, my brethren, that the service of the sanctuary and of the Sabbath is not all the work of a minister. It is perhaps the least and the lightest part of it. He must rebuke, reprove, exhort, and teach daily, *at all seasons*, and *from house to house;* otherwise he can never have the pleasure of seeing his labour prosper *. On the contrary, like the stone which Sisyphus rolled up the hill, and which rebounded to the valley whenever he slackened his efforts, our work will fall back every time we lessen our diligence, and so put us to the same necessity with the Sisyphean shade of renewing our labours. The statuary, the painter, and other artificers, after an intermission, will find their work in the state in which they left it; but we have frequently the mortification to see ours effaced, like those figures which have been made in the sand, and of which no impression remains after the tide is returned.

We must, therefore, my brethren, ply our labour with incessant care. Our business is the business of every day and of every hour; for if at any time we are remiss, the enemy will be sure to take the advantage. The kingdom of heaven is likened to a

* Acts xx. 18—30. & v. 42.

man who sowed good seed in his field, but *while men slept,* his enemy came and sowed tares among it. "Public ordinances are but a part of that pasture "which our Lord hath prepared for his sheep, and "which every true pastor ought to administer. We "must then, my brethren, as the representatives of "the great Shepherd, have *his* tenderness, love, and "care in visiting our flock, inquiring into their spi-"ritual state, their knowledge, growth, conversa-"tion, and holiness. We must, like our great High "Priest, bring their names, their doubts, their temp-"tations, before the throne; as much as administer "the two seals of the covenant, or exercise power "and authority in excluding members. Appearing "in the pulpit, and at the table of the Lord, is the "least part of our work. Our master's family on "earth (over which we are made stewards) are a "company of tempted ones; who need exhortation, "reproof, comfort, in a more personal and particular "way than can be given from the pulpit. By fre-"quent private interviews we slide into their hearts, "and draw out their whole soul, before they are "aware. By prayer with them and for them, we "make their doubts, fears, comforts, our own. "Some of the sweetest senses which we are helped "to give of scripture, we will find the issue and re-"sult of the conflicts, experiences, and love-visits of "other saints. The apostle Paul himself expected "to receive some spiritual gift from the believing "Romans, as well as to impart good to them, when "he should have an opportunity of seeing them.* "And nothing will render us more like to Christ, "than a compassionate suffering with all the mem-"bers of the church, in all their afflictions, trials, "consolations, inward and outward. Who, says "the apostle, is weak, and I am not weak? Who is "offended, and I burn not?"†

* Rom. i. 12. † Hill's Serm.

We, whom God hath honoured with the ministry of the gospel, should be devoted entirely to the service of our flock, that they may reap all possible fruit from our life and from our labours. This should be our ambition, our pleasure, our end and aim in every thing. We should consider, that, from the moment in which we enter on this sacred office, we have, as it were, given up all right over ourselves, and transferred it to the flock to which we appertain. Yes, my brethren, to this we owe our care, our time, our heart, our life, and our death too, if duty and religion should require it. This is the field we ought to labour, the vineyard we ought to cultivate, and the family we ought to manage as stewards, with all the application of which we are capable. It is not enough that we deliver the most affecting and instructive sermons; and that with all possible seriousness and warmth; it is not enough that we discharge with a becoming solemnity all the other public services of our religion; we must seek and embrace every occasion of cultivating the acquaintance of our people, and be constantly engaged in good offices among them. We must show all diligence in teaching and training the young to piety and virtue; in reclaiming, or comfirming, or perfecting those who are farther advanced in life, as their various cases may require. We must listen with tenderness and patience to the doubts and distresses of all our people, however mean may be their rank or understanding. We must relieve, or get relief to the needy, as we best can; visit and comfort the afflicted, pray by them with fervency, and exhort them with love, prudence, and fidelity. In a word, we should reckon every day and hour lost, in which we are not occupied in the way of our duty, and in which we have not an opportunity of doing something for the glory of God and the souls of our people. And that such precious opportunities may not

be lost from inattention, we ought to look often about us in search of them, and reckon our own happiness to be deeply concerned in finding them. We should in the morning say to ourselves, "What "may I do this day for my charge? How shall I "lay out myself, my time, and my means, so as "may best advance the glory of God, and the sal-"vation of souls?" In the evening, in like manner, we ought to call ourselves to an account of the improvement we have made of the day, and to examine how we have bestowed our thoughts, our words, and our actions. This recollection will furnish us with matter of praise or humiliation for the devotions of the closet. If the latter (as is most likely), it should be accompanied with a holy resolution, of improving the next day better; if, after having wasted so much of our master's goods, we shall be continued another day in our stewardship. In any event, it will be of use to consider, if more love would not beget more diligence; and to study how we may best promote that holy affection, both to God and man.

*None of us*, my brethren, *liveth unto himself*. We live for our people; and should watch over their souls as those who *have an account to render*. A minister, therefore, like his emblem in the prophetic vision, ought to be on all sides beset with eyes, as one who has not only to attend to himself, but to multitudes besides. He ought, as much as possible, to observe every step which every one of his people takes, that he may know how to deal with each of them in what concerns his salvation. Without this, how can he answer to God for the souls of which he had the charge? Alas! how can any man give an account of what he has never inquired into, and consequently never known? It will no doubt be pleaded by some, that their people are too numerous to admit of this intimate knowledge of every one of them.

But I fear it can be pleaded only by the fewest, that they made this the object of their utmost care, and that they were at all possible pains to *know the state of their flock*. And if we would wish that neither God nor our own conscience may condemn us, in this respect, we must carefully avail ourselves of the daily opportunities which may be furnished for this purpose, by Catechising, Pastoral Visits, and Visits to the Sick.

Catechising (which consists in teaching young or ignorant persons the principal points of religion, in regard to belief and practice) is so useful a part of the ministerial office, that one should think it ought to be among the last that should be laid aside. Yet in many places it seems to be almost entirely given up; in others much on the decline. The priest, it is alledged, loves his ease, and the people their ignorance. But are we, my brethren, to prefer our ease to our duty, or are we to indulge our people in their ignorance, because they love it? God forbid! We might as well, under the same pretext, indulge and countenance them in their vices. It is our business to draw off their attention from what may be most pleasing to corrupt nature, and to fix it on what is most important and useful: and that the practice of catechising our people, and more especially the younger part of them, is so, cannot be denied. A catechism contains, or should contain, the plain and fundamental articles of our faith and practice. Without learning these, in something of a systematic form, though men may have the scriptures at large in their hands, they know not often what they profess, nor can they give any good account of the faith that is in them: And without learning these things early, they seldom submit to learn them at all, much less to commit them to memory when they advance in years. We should, therefore, take care that this be done as early as possible, and that every part of what

the catechism contains be explained to them, as they shall be able to receive it. A system so short as that it may be committed to memory, were it ever so plain, has need to be enlarged on. We must also produce the scriptural proofs, as well as explanations, of what it contains, show the connection of it's parts, the tendency of it's doctrines, and the extent of it's precepts.

Besides the necessity of this practice, for giving the young a knowledge of their religion, fitting them for taking their baptismal vows upon themselves, and renewing their engagements at the Lord's supper, it is attended with the happiest consequences to those who are advanced in life, and who, if left to themselves, are but too apt to grow remiss, and to lose more than they gain in knowledge.

This practice, too, will bring our public teaching more close to our people's consciences, and make every thing we say more particular and personal, and, consequently, more regarded. It will excite them to more industry and diligence in treasuring up religious knowledge in their memories at home, as well as induce them to give the more earnest heed at church, lest the things which they hear should, at any time, slip out of their minds. Their being sure that they are soon to be questioned about what they read of the scriptures at home, and what they hear of them in sermons, as well as about their knowing and understanding the catechism, or form of sound words, which their church prescribes, is a strong incitement to diligent preparation, in order to acquit themselves properly when examined. And if they further know, that their proficiency is noted down, from time to time, in the margin of the list, and will be observed by their pastor, there will be few who will not be anxious to maintain in this, as in other respects, a character in the eyes of their neighbours and of their minister.

We should, at the same time, endeavour to make this exercise appear, as much as possible, a privilege, rather than a task or burden. I have known it so managed, that any person who was not examined, considered the neglect as the severest mark of his pastor's displeasure, which seldom failed of producing the proper fruits of self-examination, repentance, and amendment of life. It is, however, the more common case, especially where this exercise has been, for any time, allowed to fall into disuse, that many will not submit to it, and that more will not punctually attend it. But any objection that we can urge against the duty, on this score, will easily be removed, if (with prudence and prayer) we make use of that authority and discipline which is connected with our office, and of which I shall say something in the sequel. Few are so far lost as to make light of the other privileges of the gospel, which may, and ought to be withheld, if they make light of this. Or, if they should still look upon it as a duty, they must allow that duty is the only road to privilege. In either view, the practice of our part of the duty, consecrated by the example of our Saviour, and kept in force by the practice and precepts of his church ever since, is to be duly and religiously performed.

I must, however, observe, that there are a few in superior offices and stations, who, from long prescriptive use, think they have a just claim to be exempted. And we, from motives of peace and ministerial prudence, ought, perhaps, at times, to allow the claim. Not indeed because we are always satisfied that they have knowledge, but because we are sometimes afraid of exposing their ignorance. Hence, however, appears the necessity of more than ordinary diligence to instruct and catechise the children of the richer and higher classes of men, when they are young, since they will not, when they grow up, submit to it.

But let us own it, my brethren, the greatest objection to the practice of catechising our people, will be found, I fear, to lie often at our own door. "The "work is difficult, our parishes are large, and we can- "not often overtake it, amidst so much other busi- "ness." The work is, confessedly, attended with labour; and who ever dreamed that this was not the case with every part of our office? An office which requires of us, "never to cease from our labour, care, and "diligence, till we have done all that lieth in us, accord- "ing to our bounden duty, towards all such as are "committed to our care, in order to bring them to a "ripeness and perfection of stature in Christ Jesus."* An office which requires of us, "to set aside, as much "as may be, all worldly cares and studies, and to "give ourselves wholly to this vocation, and to draw "all our cares and studies this way, and to this end, "that, by our daily reading and weighing of the "scriptures, and praying for the assistance of God's "holy spirit, we may usefully perform the daily du- "ties of our calling, and wax daily riper and strong- "er in our ministry."† An office which requires of us, and requires it under the sanction of most solemn vows, "faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully, "to discharge all the parts of the ministerial work, to "the edification of the body of Christ."‡ Who "would have ever thought but such an office was extremely difficult and laborious?

Yes, my brethren, our whole office, and especially this part of it, is attended with labour. But of labour we ought to make no account, when it is productive, as here, of the greatest advantage both to ourselves and to our people. With regard to ourselves, there is nothing better calculated to exercise and increase all our gifts and graces, to give our conscien-

* Liturgy of the Church of England. † Ibid.

‡ Acts of Assembly 1711.

peace, and to fill our hearts with joy, in the prospect of that awful day on which our life and actions are to be reviewed. Besides, it will give us the best opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with our people, so as to let us know the temper, character, and conduct of each. This knowledge will enable us to address them in a suitable manner on all occasions, and to put up such prayers for them as may suit their respective conditions. And, let me ask you, my brethren, I beseech you, what mighty service can we do to the souls of our people, if we have not this intimate knowledge of their persons, names, and characters? Must a teacher know his scholars, a physician his patients, and even a herd his cattle, before they can take the proper care of their respective charges? and are not we under a stronger necessity of knowing *the flock over whom the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers*, that we may be able to *take heed to all* of them? How gladly, then, should we attend to that part of our duty, which gives us the best opportunity of acquiring this useful knowledge, by which we may have so great an advantage.

But the practice of this duty is attended with still greater gain to our people. It not only grounds them in the first principles of Christianity, and lays the foundation of religion in their souls, but also enables them to understand those terms and modes of speech which perpetually occur in our sermons. In public we speak to many; and what we say may sometimes hardly suit the particular case of any number of them; or, if it should, the fewest only will take the trouble of applying it to themselves, though ready enough to apply it to their neighbours. But, when we address only one, he knows *he is the man:* His thoughts are kept close to the discourse; he is obliged to take part in it; the whole of it is made level to his capacity, and he is forced to apply it. Indeed,

this personal and private teaching is so necessary, that, without it, little can be expected from the most excellent sermons. Try it when you please, my brethren, and you will find, that hundreds who have heard your sermons, perhaps for twenty years, are grossly and wofully ignorant, if they have not also been taught and examined in private. A teacher, who should impose no task, nor ask any question of his scholars, although he should oftener than one day in the week read excellent lectures, would find very few of them make any sensible progress. In a word, what Quinctilian says of children is equally applicable to grown people. "They are like narrow-"necked bottles, which, if you wish to fill with wa-"ter, you must take singly, and pour it into one after "another; for you will never speed by setting them "all together, and casting ever so much water among "them."

Perhaps you object to all this, "the largeness of "your parish and the numbers of your people;" and, it is to be regretted, that, on this head, there is so much reason to complain. The number of pastors is indeed very inadequate to the number of souls of which they have charge, owing sometimes to a number of churches having been suppressed, and their revenues sacrilegiously withheld; but oftener to the general indifference of rulers for the souls of men, committing thousands of them to the charge of a single person, when they would give no one man the charge of half that number of their oxen, their asses, or their sheep. But, leaving those concerned to answer for this to God, you will do well to consider if your charge and your living, dissimilar as perhaps they are, may not both be divided; or, if you might not, one way or another, by due exertion, get one or more to take a share in the burden, and assist you. In any event, you are yourself to labour, to the utmost of your power, before

you can be sure of being acquitted. You cannot, perhaps, catechise your parish half-yearly, as others may do, who have a smaller charge; if not, take a year, or even more, if necesary. Two days in the week, with a few families to each, will bring you through in good time, without being overcome with the labour; and, in the remaining part, if well managed, you can easily overtake every other part of your business.

As to the manner of conducting this part of duty, that must, in a great measure, be left to every one's own discretion. I shall only observe, that it must all be gone through in the spirit of love and meekness. Avoid all hasty, harsh, and discouraging expressions, which would be little better than daggers on these occasions. Be as condescending, and patient, and familiar, and plain, as possible. Let your people see and feel that you aim at nothing but their salvation. Make every necessary allowance for youth and age, for want of leisure and of opportunity. Ask no needless or unimportant questions, and expect no nice definitions. Many have some knowledge who have no facility of expression. Propose your questions in the simplest form, and in the plainest terms; and make every one answer in his own plain and familiar language. Ask no question that you think too difficult for the person you speak to, lest he think you mean to expose him. Never allow any one to be long at a loss, but either simplify the question, or immediately solve it. Analise the questions, which they can repeat by rote, into their component parts, that they may learn to attend to the meaning of all the particulars which these questions comprehend, and to observe the import of the words which they can repeat. Dwell chiefly on points of the greatest importance, and again and again explain them. You can hardly conceive how slow they are to understand those spiritual things to which their

thoughts are so little accustomed. The plainest truths of the gospel to them are often as the deepest mysteries. When you have done with each, direct him to what he should principally attend till called again, and mark it after his name in your roll, with any thing else that you may wish to remember concerning him. Prescribe tasks to the younger, and let them know that you mark their progress. After you have in this manner dealt with each, and pressed your suit with a holy mixture of seriousness, and terror, and love, and meekness, and evangelical allurement, conclude with an earnest and general exhortation, and with fervent prayers to God (as in the beginning), since he only can give to this, and every other mean of grace, a blessing. Psalms, and hymns of praise, are, on these occasions too, extremely becoming.

It would greatly add to the good effects of catechising, if ministers were, once every year, to go through the church catechism in public, and explain every word of it to their people. And this can be no hard matter to any man, when he has once made up his mind upon it, and formed some easy illustrations and similes, which the hearers can retain in their memory. In situations in which the people could attend, the Sabbath evenings, when the days are long, might be devoted with great advantage, to this useful exercise.

Here, then, I drop the subject of catechising, with observing, that if ministers were to make conscience of this part of their duty, and preach *from house to house*, the fruits of it would soon be manifest, in the greater knowledge, and more holy practice, of their people; whereas, without it, their public discourses are, in respect of many, in a great measure, thrown away. No wonder, when the apostle Paul himself apprehended, that if he had not *preached privately*

he might have *laboured in vain.** I charge you, therefore, my brethren, *before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, that you be instant* in this duty, *in season and out of season, with all long-suffering and doctrine.*—And I say again, let us make no account of the labour. The chance of saving, were it but one precious soul, from everlasting damnation, would deserve our incessant labour for ages, if we might thereby accomplish it. How much more, when we have the still nobler chance of saving many!

* Gal. ii. 2.

## LECTURE XXIII.

### *Of Daily Duties,—Continued.*

### II. PASTORAL VISITS.

PASTORAL VISITS are so greatly fallen into disuse in many places, that perhaps neither pastor nor people can now be much reconciled to them. They would put the one to trouble, and lay the other under a closer inspection than would be altogether pleasant. Their usefulness, however, will recommend them to the good and wise; not only among pastors, but also among flocks, few of whom, with a prudent management on our part, would be long averse to them. Yes, if the minister is truly willing and zealous, and manages his affairs with prudence and a moderate share of discipline, he will seldom have cause to complain of the greater part of his people. At any rate, we must recommend ourselves to God by doing our duty; and this is an useful part of it. If you object that your parish is large, it is but taking the longer time to make the round. A few hours a day, for only two days in the week, will soon go a great way in the largest parish, and will be neither a hard nor a disagreeable service; as it sweetly mingles the exercise of mind and body, corrects the inconveniences of a sedentary life, and will be made still lighter by the pleasure of doing good. The opportunity, indeed, though short, is precious; especially when a minister, as will soon be the case, becomes acquainted with the spiritual state of every family and of it's different members. Till this happens, it will be proper, before entering into any family, that he inform

himself well from the elder or warden of the quarter, concerning the character and condition of every person in it. Then, after entering and praying that the peace and presence of God may be there, he is to note if all the family be present, and if any change has taken place among the servants; that, if there has, he may enquire for the testimonials of such as may have come from another parish. To all the servants he is to speak of their duty, to fear and serve God, and to be obedient and faithful to their masters; so serving at once the duties of their stations as servants, and the end of their calling as christians. He is to speak to the children and younger members, of the advantage of knowing and serving God, of remembering their Creator and Redeemer in the days of their youth, and of keeping and renewing their covenant with God through Christ. He is to speak to the heads of the family about their care of their own souls and those under their roof, and of their duty to promote the ends of religion, and the worship of God in their family. He is to enquire whether indeed they do constantly and regularly maintain this worship by prayers, praises, and reading of the scriptures. He is to enquire concerning the behaviour of their servants towards God and man, concerning their sanctifying the Sabbath, and conscientiously attending to secret and public worship. And all this he must do, not only with a view of knowing how to deal with them now, but also in time coming. And if the memory should find the remembering of such particulars as he may learn concerning each to be too great a burden, it may be in some measure relieved by a list, bearing on it's margin such notices, relating to every individual, as it may be most proper to remember. He will thus know, at all times, how to address each and all of them, seasonably and suitably. And as his mind will be stored with passages of scripture suited to every age, relation, and condition, he

will give every one his own portion. And that they may not forget the passages particularly recommended to their attention, it will be proper sometimes to fold down a mark upon them in their Bibles, that they may consider them often, and lay them up in their memory.

The length of the visit should at no time exceed the relish which the persons to whom it is made may have for spiritual entertainments. To let it run out in idle words, and worldly matters, news, and such trifles, would be entirely defeating it's purpose. It would be to make that common and profane, which should be entirely consecrated to the service of religion. Any other talk, my brethren, might be maintained by any other person as well as by us; and would be a degrading of our character from the rank of sacred to that of ordinary men. The reason why we have not more hold of our people, and more respect and love from them, as ministers, is because we converse with them so little and so seldom in our ministerial character. We choose to speak to them for the most part as one of themselves, and not in the character of watchmen over their souls, and guides to eternal happiness. But if at any other time we should converse as men, at this time, at least, we ought to converse as christians. Those themes which are to occupy eternity may well engross a few minutes.

The visit, then, be it short or long, must be devoted entirely to the edification of the souls that are present; excepting such affectionate enquiries about the absent members or friends of the family, as may furnish us with proper matter for giving them a share in those joint prayers with which those visits ought always to be concluded. Before such prayer, however, it will be proper to sum up what has been said to every individual, in a short exhortation to all, to make conscience of every part of their duty, in their

respective stations and relations of life, to live in peace with each other and with all men, and to attend to reading the scriptures, private devotion, and family worship. They must be particularly exhorted to attend on public ordinances, as a duty which they owe to God, to society, and to themselves; and to spend as much as possible of the Sabbath besides, in the exercise of piety, private and domestic. For this is almost the only time that the great bulk of mankind have for meditating on what they hear in public, for reading the scriptures and other books of devotion, for considering their own ways, and for instructing their servants and their children in all the doctrines and duties of religion. Of the peculiar attention which we, on this and all other occasions, ought to give to the training up of children, I have spoken under a former head. I have only to add, therefore, on the subject of these visits, that we must, as Jerom directs us, "avoid making the least men-"tion in one place of what we hear or observe in "another, and follow the advice of Hippocrates to "his disciples, to be secret, as well as grave and pru-"dent in their whole deportment."

Those visits, too, will give us the best opportunity of knowing the necessities of the poor, and furnish proper occasions of *honouring God with our substance*, by relieving them in such a measure as we can, besides recommending them to the charity of others. Nothing will give so much efficacy to our counsel, as our kind sympathy and charity to those who need our aid. And our means, as well as our labour, are then best bestowed, when they tend to promote the everlasting interests of souls, and to recommend our holy religion, which they have been often found to do, it's bitterest enemies themselves being judges. "Is it not a shame," says the apostate Julian,* "that

* Letter to Arsacius, Heathen High Priest of Galatia.

" when the Jews suffer none of theirs to beg, and " the Galileans relieve not only their own, but those " also of our religion, that we only should be defec- " tive in so necessary a duty !"

According to his abilities, then, a minister of this heavenly religion ought to be a pattern in this, as in every other grace and virtue, and in charity, as well as piety, to excel the rest of mankind. He ought to consider how well it becomes him, how valuable an influence it will give him, and (however little he may have to spare) how willingly he should deny himself in other things, and straiten himself in any thing, that he may be the abler to abound in giving alms. He ought to be able to say with *Nazianzen*,* " If I " possess either means, or health, or credit, or learn- " ing, this is all the satisfaction I desire from them, " that I may have somewhat I may despise, and be- " stow, for the sake of Christ." To bestow, for the sake of Christ, however little we may have, is the surest way to increase our store. You have heard of the charity of the brethren of the Abbey of *Fountains*,† even when reduced to the greatest straits themselves. During the first year of their establishment, before they had yet any return from their lands, they were obliged to subsist, at times, on the leaves of trees, and wild herbs, boiled with a little salt. Yet even in this season of distress, they neither despaired of the bounty of God, nor withheld their charity from the poor, when they had any thing to bestow. One day the abbot had been abroad in the neighbourhood to beg but returned without obtaining any aid. Two loaves and a half was all the little store they had now remaining. A stranger came to request a morsel of bread for himself and his indigent family. All the monks looked first at their little portion, and then looked up to God. Give

* Orat. 1. † See Grose's Ruins of Abbeys, &c.

him, said the abbot, one of the loaves; we can never be losers by giving alms. Yes, give it, said all; for God will provide for us. It happened according to their faith: for their wants were soon supplied by the arrival of a cart-load of bread, sent them as a present from a rich neighbour, who was struck with the account which he got of their kindness and distress from the very stranger whom they had a little before relieved. Remember too the widow of Sarepta; and the peculiar promises of mercy to those who show it.

I trust I need not recommend the careful oversight and management of any public charities that may be under our care. They are a sacred trust, to which conscience, if not law, obliges us to attend. Let it, therefore, be our first care, to preserve them, as if they were our own, and then to apply them, as knowing we have an account to render to God of our stewardship. With regard to the civil laws made for the maintenance of the poor, it is a delicate, and perhaps a doubtful point, to determine how far it might be for the general interest of the poor themselves, to have them always put in their full force. It is however, good to have them for the last resource, if, in any place it should be found necessary and expedient to use them.

## LECTURE XXIV.

*The subject continued.*

### III. VISITING THE SICK.

VISITING THE SICK and THE AFFLICTED, in body or mind, is another considerable part of a minister's duty, and so important a part of the christian character in general, that our Saviour makes part of the enquiry, on the day of judgment, to turn upon it; and the apostle James intimates, that no man can be truly religious without it. Hence it is enjoined in a special manner, upon ministers, and that on pain of deposition, by the laws of our church.* Nor ought a minister to go about this duty only when he is sent for, as that is generally too late for his being of any service. He is to go as soon as he hears that any of his flock is ill; and, during his illness, to see him as often as in his power. On these occasions, the most thoughtless are disposed to be serious, as they are in a manner obliged to think of eternity. We ought, therefore, to improve such opportunities with care, and to co-operate with the dispensations of providence, in forming the soul to virtue, or in confirming dispositions of holiness

* "It is ordained, that such as shall be found not given "to their book, and to the study of the scriptures, nor given "to sanctification and prayer; such as study not to be pow- "erful and spiritual; such as are cold, and wanting spirit- "ual zeal, *negligent in visiting the sick,* and caring for the "poor, be censured according to the degree of their faults; "and, continuing therein, be deposed." Acts of Assembly 1668.

where they are found and formed already. When the time is so short, and heaven or hell so near, it is high time for us, and for them, to be diligent, to redeem the time, and to lay hold of eternal life. But, the cases of men being so various; it must be left to the minister's own prudence how to treat them, as no general rules can suit every particular occasion. Sometimes the sick may not be in condition to attend to exhortations; and, when they are, it requires much discretion to observe the due mean betwixt terrifying them too much on the one hand, and encouraging them too much on the other. He can lay before them, from the scriptures, what a christian ought to be, and assist their consciences in examining what they were, and what they are. In so serious a season, this examination and review of life may excite such holy affections and resolutions in those who were good in the main, as may be of comfort to themselves, and of use to others. The light that burned but dimly may thus be trimmed, if the sick in time had provided oil for the lamp. If, unhappily, he did not, we must not, in opposition to scripture, give ground to think, that, after the call to meet the bridegroom is given, it may yet be provided.

In all cases, however, it will be proper that the minister pray with and for the sick, in such terms as scripture may warrant and allow. It will be proper also, that he inform himself of their conduct and character, if he does not already know it, so that he may be able to address them suitably, endeavouring, in all tenderness and love, to convince the ungodly, to strengthen the weak, to comfort such as require consolation, to direct them how to improve their afflictions, to help them to be sensible of the evil of sin, of the faults and neglects of their lives, of the vanity of the world, of the necessity of a Saviour, of the sufficiency of the redeemer, and the

certainty and excellency of the everlasting glory. He is to exhort them to exercise faith and repentance, and to set their affections on the things that are above. Sometimes he may meet with those who are so insensible of their sin and danger, that he must endeavour to awaken them with the terrors of God, the judgment, and the wrath to come. He must endeavour to make them sensible of their sins, by specifying such as he may know or suspect them to have been guilty of, and then urge them to such acts of repentance as they may yet be able to perform. Yet, "if they have been men of a bad course "of life, he must give them no encouragement to "hope much from this death-bed repentance, though "he is to set them to implore the mercies of God "in Christ Jesus, and to do all they can to obtain "his favour. But, unless the sickness has been of "a long continuance, and that a person's repent-"ance, his patience, and his piety, have been very "extraordinary during the course of it, he must be "sure to give no positive ground of hope, but "leave him to the mercies of God; for there can-"not be any greater treachery to souls, or any "thing that is more fatal and pernicious, than the "giving quick and easy hopes to dying persons, "upon so short, so forced, and so imperfect a re-"pentance. It not only makes those persons perish "securely themselves, but it leads all about them "to destruction, when they see one, of whose bad "life and late repentance they have been the wit-"nesses, put so soon in hopes; nay, by some un-"faithful guides, made sure of salvation. There-"fore, though no dying man is to be driven to "despair, and left to die obstinately in his sins "(as the best thing he can do, in any event, is to "repent;) yet, if we love the souls of our people, "if we set a due value on the blood of Christ, and "if we are touched with any sense of the honour

" and interests of religion, we must not say any " thing that may encourage others, who are but " too apt, of themselves, to put off all to the last " hour."*

Reason, common sense, the nature of man, who is a child of habit, his condition in a state of discipline and probation, the nature of God, and the nature of the heavenly felicity, with the necessity of our inward faculties being adapted to the outward objects, all declare against the efficacy of a late and death bed repentance, and though the scripture is somewhat reserved and silent on the point, the whole tenour of it is against it, without a single promise, or a single example, to encourage us to trust to it. What comfort, then, can we pretend or dare to give to those who have brought themselves to so unhappy a situation? But, God forbid we should torment them before the time, by tearing them from the slender twig by which they hang. Let us rather recommend and leave them to that mercy which they have abused and forfeited, and say, with Augustine, " we accept of their repentance who de- " layed their conversion to the end of their lives; " but we make no great account of such conver- " sions."

In comparison of this, how pleasant is our task when we have to do with real christians, or true and holy believers! In our visits to persons of this stamp, it is our business to make them comfortably hope for the kingdom which God hath promised to those that love him, to commit their souls to their Redeemer, and quietly rest in the will, the love, and the promises of God; and to glorify him now by *bearing*, as formerly by *doing*, his holy will. We are to labour to make them willing. if their time is

* Burnet's Past. Care.

come, to depart and be with Christ, and to exhort them to make reparation to such as they may have, in any manner of way, wronged; to forgive any who may have wronged them; to make a pious, just, and charitable disposal of all their worldly affairs; to declare their experience of the goodness and faithfulness of their covenant-God; and to recommend the choice which they have made to those whom they leave behind them.

If such as thought themselves dying, should, at any time, recover, it is our business to remind them of any vows, promises, or resolutions they may have made (as is usually the case) in the time of their sickness, that their future life may show the sincerity of their professions, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which, if they fail to do, we must admonish and reprove them, and, if need be, denounce the judgments of God against them; so shall we save, if not their souls, at least our own.

And if the afflictions of the body call for our sympathy and aid, my brethren, how much more do the afflictions and distresses of the soul! These are heaviest in themselves; for *the spirit of a man may bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?* Yet these generally meet with the least sympathy and pity from the world. Alas! instead of pity, the world is too often disposed to treat the poor sufferer with contempt and scorn; or, at best, to prescribe such medicines as serve rather to fester than to heal his wounds. Thus, some send for music, as Saul did for a harper, when the evil spirit vexes with temptations. Hence the necessity lies the stronger upon us, who ought to be physicians of the soul, to show all tenderness and pity, to examine into the nature of the disease, and (if it falls within our province, and is not the effect of bodily distemper) to apply the proper remedy.

But where is this remedy to be found? I answer, in the word of God only, and more particularly in the promises of scripture, and in the experiences of the saints therein recorded. Of every thing else prescribed by the world for the ease of a wounded conscience, such as, mirth, company, and amusements, we may say, as Job did of his friends, *Miserable comforters are they all.* But to apply properly the remedies contained in scripture, requires much prudence and skill in the spiritual physician. An awakened conscience is a powerful casuist, and needs often all the knowledge which we can derive from casuistical divinity, from practice, and experience, as well as a deep insight into human nature, and a thorough acquaintance with the word of God, in order to satisfy all it's queries, and solve all it's doubtings. Indeed, sometimes the case is otherwise, and very weak things may trouble a weak christian. But, even then, it is our part to regard these lesser scruples of a tender conscience with the utmost condescension, sympathy, and mildness. It is our part to calm the troubled mind, to appease the timorous conscience, and to communicate consolations to the afflicted soul, that wishes to be instructed, guided, comforted, and established. To such, it is our part to represent the truth, in a manner so clear, and strong, and affectionate, as to open the heart both to conviction and consolation. We ought to imitate him who never broke the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax.—We ought, like him, to bind up that *which is broken in spirit*, and to *strengthen that which is weak* and exercised with temptations. Yes, we ought, like the Great Shepherd, to *carry the lambs in our bosom*, by showing the most affectionate regard to the young and timid convert, and to *lead gently* those that are with young, in whom the work of grace is no more than forming, and whose hearts are greatly oppressed with doubts and difficulties. And, to do all this as

we ought, what skill, and prudence, and patience, and diligence, and, above all, what bowels of compassion, and tender affection, are required! Who is sufficient for these things! Or who, indeed, could attempt these, and all the other difficulties of our office, if we had not the promise of the Spirit of God to aid us?

Notwithstanding this great and precious promise, however, it is to be feared, that some of us may not set about these duties so cheerfully as we ought, since the labour which they infer is so weighty. But, if they infer labour, take up time, deprive us of innocent amusements, and interrupt our studies, yet this is the business which we have deliberately chosen, which we have vowed to perform, and to which we were solemnly devoted. And, if there is much of the duty left to our own consciences (as no laws can reach to every particular case), we ought, on that account, if we have any ingenuousness, to discharge it the more willingly and faithfully, and, on all occasions, study more to fulfil than to evade our duty. For, if we do no more than what we may be compelled to do, and only make a fashion of doing what, for shame, we cannot omit, we must look but for little success in this world, and for no reward in the other. In either world, every thing that is truly good is to be attained only by diligence and labour. This is the price which God hath put upon every thing that is truly valuable.

But that labour, my brethren, which we dread so much in discharging this part of our duty, may be greatly lessened, if a minister carries on his pastoral visits, and his catechisings, at the same time, in different parts of his cure. By this mean, not only a due interval will be kept between these exercises, in the same place, but much of the visiting of the sick will fall in his way, on his catechising or visiting days.

Besides the labour which attends this part of our duty, it will perhaps be urged by such as wish to avoid it, that it exposes to much danger, especially in the case of visiting persons who are afflicted with infectious diseases. In regard to this, after observing, that our great pattern went straight from the service of the sanctuary to the family that had the fever,* I shall do little more than repeat the words of one who spent a great part of his life and fortune, in doing that, from choice, which we are called to do from duty. "I have been frequently asked, "(says the heavenly Howard, whose humanity led "him to visit most of the jails in Europe,) I have "been frequently asked, what precautions I use to "preserve myself from infection in the prisons and "hospitals which I visit? I here answer, next to "the free goodness and mercy of the author of my "being, temperance and cleanliness are my chief "preservatives. Trusting in the divine providence, "and believing myself in the way of my duty, I "visit the most noxious cells; and, while thus em-"ployed, *I fear no evil.* I never enter an hospital "or prison before breakfast; and, in an offensive "room, I seldom draw my breath deeply." When God and duty calls us, my brethren, we may safely go any where, and trust to him, who sends us, for protection. "If I were obliged," says Luther, "to "encounter, at *Wormes*, as many devils as there are "tiles on the houses of that city, this would not de-"ter me from appearing there, when I go at the "call of duty and religion." In obedience to this call, the Jewish priests, without fear, visited even the lepers.† I am ashamed to say more. Yonder the physician goes to the hospital.

In like manner, should we, my brethren, perform our duty, and trust the consequence to God. Our

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* Mark i. 29. 30. † Lev. xiii. & xiv. and Psal. xci.

times are in his hands, and neither death nor disease can touch us, without his permission. Rabbi Simeon ben Chalaph, a priest of awful sanctity, was invited to the banquet which a wealthy Jew made at the circumcision of his son. The richest and the oldest wines were served, and the heart of the father was glad. "Rejoice with me, my friends," said he, "till my old age, my wine and my son shall cheer "me." The feast was protracted beyond the midnight hour; but Rabbi Simeon withdrew in the twilight. On his way home, he met the angel of death, with his countenance clouded with sorrow. "Why "art thou so sad," said Simeon, "seeing thou art "the messenger of Jehovah?" "I am grieved," replied the angel, "at the foolish conversation of mor-"tals, who promise to themselves long life, when "their days are already numbered. The man with "whom you just now parted, as he said, 'till my "old age, my wine and my son shall cheer me,' in "three days must die." "Sad indeed," said Sime-"on; but tell me, I beseech thee, when art thou to "come for me?" "Over thee, and the like of "thee," said the angel of death, "I have no power; "for your times are in the hands of God himself; "and, in consideration of the good works in which "you abound, and in which he delights, he often "protracts your lives, in despite of every danger, and "over you extends his own pavilion."*

Independent, indeed, of this particular providence, which guards the good, those exalted, exquisite, and most refined pleasures, which attend upon the exercise of beneficence, and that cheerfulness of spirits, and strong hope of immortality, which result from a consciousness of having done one's duty, and of being in favour with God, are, in the highest degree, conducive to health, and of wonderful efficacy in

* Vid. Elleh haddabh. rak. ap, Lightfoot; Hor. Heb.

bearing up a faithful minister, under all the toil and burden of his office. Besides, a spirit ardently intent on the pursuit of great and noble objects, is elevated above those cankering cares, and guilty fears, which usually prey upon the vitals, and both increase the miseries, and lessen the measure, of the days of man.

But, the greatest encouragement of all to the discharge of every part of our office, is the promise of the divine presence and assistance, so peculiarly made to the servants of God in the holy ministry. And, if God be with us, can any thing be too hard for us? No; through Christ strengthening us, we can do all things. Hence those wonders of doing and of suffering, which the most faithful servants of God have, in all ages, been enabled to go through. They found the powers of the soul expand in proportion to the objects which it had to compass, when conscious of the goodness of their cause, insomuch that the world has often been astonished at what this true enthusiasm has been able to perform. What then should discourage us in a service in which we have such present pleasures, such future prospects, such great and precious promises, that *as our day so shall our strength be,* and such a cloud of witnesses to whom these promises have, in all ages, been fulfilled.

So much for that part of our daily duty which relates to visiting the sick. We next proceed to speak of that *discipline and order*, which, as a part of his office, a minister ought to maintain among his people.

## LECTURE XXV.

### *The subject of Daily Duties,—Continued.*

### IV. DISCIPLINE, &c.

PRIVATE ADMONITION is the first and most necessary part of discipline, and, if duly exercised "as need may require and as occasion may be given," there would seldom be any necessity of proceeding farther. Every faithful minister, therefore, will make conscience of this part of his duty, and administer admonition, exhortation, and reproof to all within his cure, as prudence may direct, and as their respective circumstances may require, that he may thus "maintain and set forward, as much as "lieth in him, quietness, and peace, and love, among "all christian people, and especially among those of his own cure."* And this he must do without respect of persons. He must not, through a mistaken tenderness for some, or from a fear of incurring the displeasure of others, allow any to live without due censure, in the open practice of scandalous crimes, when he ought to *rebuke them with authority, that others also may fear.* At the same time, he ought to do all this without any unnecessary severity, or any offence to good manners. Reproof, like physic, should be so sweetened and prepared, as to be made palatable; otherwise corrupt nature will reject it, however salutary it may be. As it was in the ark of the tabernacle of old, the manna and the rod must go together.†

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* Liturgy of the Church of England:

† In arca tabernaculi erant virga correctionis, manna dulcedinis.

In no part of our duty, my brethren, is it necessary to shew your love and meekness more than in private admonitions; lest you should provoke when you wish to reform. You must therefore deal with the offenders, not only with the opportunity and earnestness which becomes a man employed on the part of God, but also with the tender love of a parent for the soul of his child. You must commend where you can; blame where you must. Show that you are always more concerned than angry. Represent no fault as greater than it really is; and readily admit of excuses for the past, when accompanied with promises of amendment for the future. Delight more to caution than reprove, and, above all, encourage and exhort.

Our admonitions, my brethren, ought not only to be given in private, but kept private also; that it may appear to the admonished that they have proceeded from a sense of duty, a tender regard to their persons, and a strong love to their souls. Then may we hope that the seed thus sown shall, sooner or later, spring up in their hearts, and that the happy fruits of it will appear in their better conduct. Sometimes, indeed, our labour may be lost; but then we have done our duty, and *our judgment is with our God.* Sometimes, too, the case may be so forbidding, that to offer our admonitions would be imprudent. But this will happen but rarely, if we watch every favourable opportunity, while any hope may be left us. Much of the success of our admonitions depends on the manner and time in which we give them.

When private admonitions have no effect, and a person's sins are public and scandalous, his minister ought not only to deny him sealing ordinances, which probably he may not think of asking, but if he continue contumacious, ought to follow the method directed by the church, to make sinners ashamed, and to separate such from holy things, till they have edi-

fied the church as much by their repentance and the outward profession of it, as they had formerly scandalized it by their disorders. By this means he will observe the rule appointed by Christ in his church, of regarding *as heathens* those who will not listen to our admonitions, of *noting those who walk disorderly*, of *separating ourselves from them*, of *having no fellowship with them*, *no, not so much as to eat with them*. To the last expedient, however, of extruding them from the communion of the faithful, in solemn form, we must have recourse but very seldom. Excommunication is of too awful a nature to be made too common or familiar. For my own part, I hope God will enable me to discharge my duty with faithfulness, without ever using so desperate a remedy. In nothing, my brethren, do we need more prudence than in using the power of the keys.

"The admonishing of men of rank, who set an "ill example to others, ought always to be done in "that way which will probably have the best effect "on them. Therefore it must be done secretly, and "with expressions of tenderness and respect for their "persons. Fit times are to be chosen for this; and "it may be often the best way to do it by a letter; "for there may be ways fallen upon of reproving "the worst men in so soft a manner, that if they "are not reclaimed, yet they shall not be irritated or "made worse by it; which is but too often the case "of an idiscreet reproof. By this means the minister may save the sinner's soul: he is at least sure "to save his own, by having discharged his duty."*

Besides endeavouring to reform the wicked, our admonitions will further aim at stirring up the negligent to more care, and at making the good themselves more eminent in piety and virtue. And if we are careful to embrace every opportunity of doing so

* Burnet's Past. Care.

with prudence, we shall have no cause to complain of the want of success. The mean is in itself so likely, that the best and greatest of the heathen moralists assiduously practised it, as the most promising method to effect a reformation. "It has been the "custom of my life, (says Socrates* to the men of "Athens) to be taking you aside, one after another, "like a father or an elder brother, and to be inces- "santly exhorting you to apply yourselves to virtue; "as I take it God has pitched upon me for this very "purpose." A speech worthy of the notice, and an example worthy of the imitation of every faithful minister of the gospel.

It is hardly necessary to observe, that the duties now mentioned cannot be performed by a minister without *residing constantly* among his people, and attending daily to his charge. It is required of all those to whom the care of souls is committed, that they take heed to themselves and to all the flock over whom the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers, that they govern well the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood; that they watch, and labour, and fulfil their ministry; all which they cannot do, if as hirelings, they forsake the flock committed to them, and do not watch over those sheep, whose blood will be required at their hands at the last day. For it is certain, that no excuse will be received if the wolf devours the sheep, when the shepherd does not attend them.† It is also required of those to whom the care of souls is committed, to know their sheep, to feed them by the word of God, by the administration of the sacraments, by the example of a good life, by administering consolation

* In his Apology.

† Act. Concil. Trid. Sess. 6. and Sess. 23. &c. "It is or- "dained, That ministers, non-residents at their flocks, be "deprived." Act. Assemb. 1638.

admonition, and reproof, to the sick, and to the whole within their care, as occasion shall be given. It is required of them to hold up the weak, heal the wounded, bind up the broken, bring again the outcasts, seek the lost. In a word, it is required of them, to lay themselves out in all the functions of their ministry. Now all this cannot be performed by those who do not watch over their flock, and reside with it as constantly as possible; much less by those who unwarrantably, and *for filthy lucre's sake*, take upon them more charges than one at once. Ah! my brethren, if we, who by our exhortations teach others to set their affections on things above, show, in this manner, that our own chief desire is to acquire wealth and worldly honour, to seek after company and amusement abroad, or even to enjoy ourselves in indolence at home, our condemnation must be as dreadful as our guilt is aggravated. "We are allowed accommodation and subsistence in our "charge, to enable us to reside with our people constantly, that we may know them thoroughly, and "consequently speak to them suitably; that our presence may awe the bad and encourage the good; "and that we may lay hold of every opportunity "that offers, to minister advice and comfort to the "sick and afflicted, relief to the needy, instruction "to the ignorant, and friendly offices to all, as need "shall require and occasion be given. This is what "we owe to our flocks, and what we owe to our "Lord; and the present peace and final comfort of "our souls depend on our never neglecting it, on any "plea but such as our conscience assures us will be "sustained at the tribunal of Christ. There our diligence and zeal will be the condition of our acceptance, and the measure of these the measure "of our reward. If we content ourselves with a "partial discharge of our duty, and, by absence, "or indolence, or amusement, or business, or even

"studies, are lost to our people, or worse than lost "to them by any levity or imprudence, our presence "will be of little avail. But this is no excuse for "absence, but a strong reason for being active and "useful, as well as for being present."*

Let no minister, therefore, imagine that he may at any time absent himself from his charge, his single charge, without such an excuse as he may be able to plead before God in judgment. Nor let him suppose that it is enough, if he be present, to perform the stated and occasional duties of his office. "The "stated and occasional duties! Good God! Is this "our care, our anxious concern for the souls of those "of whom we are to give an account to our Redeem-"er? How many occasions do we thus lose, where "a single word, perhaps, might rescue a poor wretch "from sin and misery! (for a single word will of-"ten encourage the good, check the bad, support "the weak, and resolve the doubting.) And where "is the influence of our example!"†

In short my brethren, nothing else will save us, than to labour diligently in God's vineyard, from first to last, for the good of souls.‡ All this, it is true,

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* Archbishop Secker's Charge.

† Bishop Bagot's Charge, 1784.

‡ "*Stewards, watchmen, shepherds, labourers,* these and ev-"ery other expression that implies *personal attention,* unre-"mitted assiduity, vigilance, and fidelity, are applied to "you in scripture. You are commanded, before God and "the Lord Jesus Christ, to be instant, in season and out of "season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering "and doctrine; to watch in all things; to do the work of "an evangelist, and make full proof of your ministry." And the ordination office enjoins, "That you never cease "your labour, your care, and diligence, until you have "done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty,

cannot be accomplished without the most unremitting diligence and pains. But this will seem no hard matter to such as have a right sense of their ordination vows, of the value of souls and, of the dignity of their office. Their heart is in their work, and the love which they bear to it will make every part of it appear a pleasure rather than a burden. They would not exchange it, with all their toils, for any station power, profit or honour, among mortals. Nor none of them can compare with ours, in point of either present pleasures or future prospects, if we acquit ourselves as becomes our character. Why then should we make any account of our labour? "In all "other professions, those who follow them labour "in them all the year long, and are hard at their "business every day of the week, and almost every "hour of the day. Indeed, there is no trade or "course of life, that does not take up the whole "man; and shall ours only be an exception? Ours, "that is the noblest of all, and that has a certain "subsistence fixed to it, and does not live by con-"tingencies and hopes, as all others do; and shall "we make the labouring in our business an objec-

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"to bring all such as are, or shall be committed to your "charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge "of God, and that ripeness and perfectness of aid in Christ, "that there be no place left among you, either for error "in religion, or viciousness in life."

"These are all of them evidently *personal duties;* and it "is to my conception utterly impossible for any man, who "seriously believes that he must *give an account of his stew-"ardship* at the last day, to read such injunctions as these, "and then render himself incapable of fulfilling them, by "absenting himself from his cure, seeking amusement or "employment elsewhere, and trusting to another for the dis-"charge of duties which belong *solely and entirely* to him-"self." Bishop Beilby's Charge, 1790.

" tion against any part of our duty ?"* Ought we not to have laid our account with all this labour when we entered upon the office of the holy ministry ? We then undertook a charge, which the scriptures frequently compare to whatever requires most labour, as well as most care and diligence among mankind. We undertook an office compared, indeed, from it's dignity, to that of rulers, ambassadors, and even angels ; while the names of builders, labourers, and soldiers, and the significant emblem of our Lord's washing the feet of his disciples, show the necessity of incessant labour, and of descending to the meanest offices of charity for our brethren. We undertook to be guides, instructors, pastors, watchmen, stewards, to that people *over whom the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers.* We have, under Christ, undertaken to lead a band of his soldiers against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places. We must go before them in the sharpest conflicts ; we must acquaint them with all the stratagems and assaults of their enemies, we must watch ourselves, and keep them watching, for if we neglect this, both they and we together may perish. And then how shall we answer it to Christ at the last day, when he calls us to account for those souls which he purchased with his precious blood ! How shall we face our people, when we meet them at his tribunal ? Or how can we hope to be saved, if only one soul through our neglect has perished ?

" I confess (said a faithful servant of God) that " I seldom hear the bell toll for one that is dead, " but conscience asks me, what hast thou done for " the saving of that soul before it left the body? " There is one more gone into eternity, what didst " thou to prepare him for it? and what testimony " must he give to the judge concerning thee ? Such

* Burnet's Past. Care.

" questions will naturally occur, at such a time, to " every minister, whose conscience has not lost all " feeling and tenderness. When one of our flock " passes the awful line of separation, or when we are " laying his remains in the chamber of darkness, how " can we help reflecting with ourselves, and saying, " here lies the body, but where is the soul? What " did I for it before it departed? It was part of my " charge, what account can I give of it to God?"* To enable us to *give our account with joy, and not with grief*, we ought, my brethren, to labour in our ministry day and night, with unremitting ardour; considering that many of the souls under our charge may, alas! in a few days be out of our reach, and for ever fixed in heaven or hell. How should this consideration teach us to improve every moment, and to grasp eagerly at every opportunity of doing them all the good we can? especially when we consider how many things there are in one soul that need our notice; how many such souls we have to do with; how ignorant the most of them are in things of everlasting moment: and, what is still worse, how unwilling they are to learn them; and that we can speak to them perhaps but once for fifty or a hundred times that they are addressed by the emissaries of Satan! What activity, industry, and zeal, must we have to go through our labours! What firmness of mind to support us under all the difficulties and trials of our calling! And what need of earnest prayers for the Spirit of God to help us!

Seeing, therefore our office requires the most incessant diligence, how dreadful and aggravated will our final condemnation be, if souls under our ministry perish by our neglecting any part of the great work which we have undertaken! " Our parents " who destined us for the ministry; our tutors who

* Baxter's Reformed Pastor.

" taught us for it; our learning and ministerial gifts; " our voluntary undertaking the care of souls; all " the care of God for his church; all that Christ " hath done and suffered for it; all the precepts, " promises and threatenings of the holy scriptures; " all the examples of prophets, apostles and preach- " ers there recorded; all the books in our study " which tells us of our duty, or any way assist us in " it, all will rise in judgment against us! All the ser- " mons which we have preached to convince men " of the danger of sin, of the torments of hell, of " the joys of heaven; to quicken them in their du- " ty, or reprove their neglect; all the maintenance " we take for our service; all the honour we re- " ceive from the people; all the ministerial privile- " ges we enjoy; all the witness we have borne to " the neglect of our ministers; all the judgments and " mercies of God with which we have been acquaint- " ed; all the fervent prayers of God's people, which " were offered on our account; and, finally, all our " own vows, promises, and resolutions, for diligence " in our work, will, at the last great day, aggravate " our condemnation, if we are found unfaithful in " our Master's service."*

Such awful considerations, my brethren, may alarm us, if softer motives will not allure us, to our duty. But, as I would hope that these last may have a considerable influence upon the best and most ingenuous part of our nature, I shall here suggest a few of them, in the words of an excellent performance, cited on several occasions already. " Let us " consider our respective congregations, my bre- " thren, in the nearest and most interesting point " of light, even as a certain portion of our fellow- " travellers, committed to our care, through this " journey of human life, and, by appointment of pro-

* Baxter's Reformed Pastor.

" vidence, especially entrusted to us for direction, as-
" sistance, and consolation. When we view our peo-
" ple in this new and endearing relation, as depend-
" ing on us for instruction when ignorant, for help
" when distressed, and for comfort when afflicted,
" we must be very insensible if we do not feel a new
" flow of good will towards them, a strong inclina-
" tion to enter into their concerns, to take their
" pains and their feelings upon us, and to watch for
" opportunities of doing them good. What though
" kind offices among them should take up much
" time, require much pains, put us to much real trou-
" ble and inconvenience, rob us of many agreeable
" amusements, and greatly interrupt delightful and
" useful studies! A just sense of the important rela-
" tion in which we stand to our respective flocks,
" and a genuine feeling of that tender affection
" which is due to them, will not allow us to hesitate
" one moment, whether that part of our time is most
" worthily employed, which is taken up in doing real
" offices of friendship among them; or that part of
" it which is spent in perusing the finest writings of
" the greatest geniuses that ever appeared in the
" world; or in polishing any little compositions of
" our own. Is the arranging of words, the measur-
" ing periods, the beautifying of language, or even
" storing our own minds with the divinest senti-
" ments, an employment of equal dignity and im-
" portance in itself, or equally pleasant on reflec-
" tion, with that of composing differences, extin-
" guishing animosities, searching out modest indigent
" merit, and relieving it, giving counsel to a perplex-
" ed mind, suspending pain by our sympathy and
" presence, though it were but for a moment, sug-
" gesting to an unfurnished mind proper materials for
" meditation in the time of distress, or laying hold of
" a favourable opportunity of conveying valuable in-
" structions, and religious impressions, to a mind

" little susceptible of them on other occasions? There " is no need of saying any thing in confirmation of " this ; it was the glorious character of Jesus, that " he *went about doing good.*"*

To conclude, my brethren, let us make the interest of our people our own. Let their advancement in knowledge and holiness be our honour, their consolation our joy, their prosperity or adversity our pleasure or pain. Let all we are, all we have, be devoted, as much as possible, to their service. In a word, let us live only for Christ and his church ; and in his service, if called to it, let us rejoice to die. Let us reckon, with the apostle, not even our life dear, provided we accomplish the ministry we have received from the Lord. Happy the pastor who is thus devoted to his charge ! To him every labour is sweet, every toil is pleasant. His whole life is one labour of love, and his death an entrance into heaven !

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* Leechman's Syn. Serm.

## LECTURE XXVI.

### *Of the Domestic Duties, or Family Religion, of a Minister of the Gospel.*

HAVING enumerated some of the daily duties of a minister in his parish, I might now speak of those which, in common with all other good christians, he ought to discharge in the closet and family. But, of the first of these, what has been already said on the subject of prayer, may at present suffice; and, instead of delineating the last, I shall only relate the following narrative, which I had, of the daily practice of the venerable and aged Theophilus, from one who had spent a day or two in his family. "As "I approached his house in the evening, I heard, as I "drew near, the voice of psalms. The family were "engaged in worship, and so intent on their devo- "tions, that I joined them, I believe, without being "observed. The singing continued long enough to "animate, but not to tire. A portion of scripture "was then read, with a solemnity and emphasis be- "coming the word of God. On this the saint made "a few short, but pertinent reflections and practical "improvements, as soon as he had done. He also "introduced much of what he had read into the de- "vout and fervent prayer which ensued, during which "the whole family kneeled, but did not lean. The "whole was closed with an evening hymn, and the "*Gloria Patri*, at which, as in the singing of psalms, "the most of them, I think, stood, (deeming this, "I suppose, the most reverent posture in addressing "and praising God,) while their hands, eyes, and, "I am persuaded, their hearts too, were lifted up to

"heaven. I thought I perceived every one repeat-
"ing the words under his breath, and giving a hear-
"ty assent to every petition This, perhaps, con-
"tributed to make them more serious and attentive.

"Worship being ended, the saint gave me the right
"hand of fellowship, and discoursed of various sub-
"jects, in a heavenly and edifying manner, suited to
"his profession, to his years, and to his near hopes.
"A temperate and frugal meal was then served, on
"which the saint, standing up, and raising his hands
"and eyes to heaven, implored the divine blessing,
"with a solemn audible voice, and of a length becom-
"ing a joint and serious act of devotion. With the
"like exercise the meal was closed, and the family,
"with many pious ejaculations, went to take their
"repose for the night. Their private devotions, which
"they performed by turns, as each had opportunity,
"were, as I understand, all over before supper, when
"the faculties are less subject to drowsiness and dis-
"traction, and therefore the fitter for a spiritual ser-
"vice.

"As the day ended, so it began, with God.—
"Each, as he rose next morning, betook himself
"to private devotions; and, some time afterwards,
"the whole joined in family worship, before they
"sat down to their morning meal. After a solemn
"pause, a few words, by way of *sursum corda*, and
"a pious ejaculation to God for aid and acceptance,
"the service proceeded in the same order as on the
"preceding night. The hymns, on both occasions,
"were adapted to christian worship, as well as to
"the particular season; not unlike those of Bishop
"Kenn, part of whose midnight hymn also, as I
"thought, occupied some moments, which were, at
"the midnight season, stolen from sleep, and added
"to the great purpose of existence, the promoting of
"the glory of God, and the preparing for the eternal
"enjoyment of him in heaven.

" The morning meal was conducted in the same " manner as that of the evening; and, as I was " urged to stay for a day or two, I now prepared to " accompany Theophilus in the course of his daily " duty, after he should spend, as usual, an hour or " two in his study or closet. The catechising of " about twenty persons, in a neighbouring farm, " was the principal business of the day, and took " up between two and three hours. This exercise " began with psalms and prayers; after which the " individuals of each family were examined in order, " their proficiency marked in the margin of the list, " and their attention respectively directed to what- " ever points of necessary knowledge they were found " to be deficient in, or required their first and great- " est care. Such as were desirous, and found quali- " fied to communicate, received tickets of admission, " with suitable advices; and to the young were pre- " scribed tasks of hymns, psalms, and prayers. A " general exhortation, joined with a hymn and pray- " er, closed this part of the day's business, which " was all performed in a lively, earnest, and solemn " manner. True devotion has in it something so en- " gaging, that I believe the profane, in hearing such " impressive and pathetic exhortations, would, in " spite of their nature, be devout.

" The visiting of a sick person, on our way home, " occupied some time afterwards. The person was " a noviciate or candidate for holy orders, so far " gone in a consumption, as to be seemingly near his " end, and I believe, more than seemingly prepared " for the event. When we entered, his face, like that " of Hezekiah, was turned to the wall, and, like him " too, he was praying, but not for an addition of " years or days to his life. He had been repeating, " as I understood, from what I overheard of it, part " of Hildebert's *Oratio ad Dominum*, [which, in case

" you may not have seen it, I hereto subjoin in " a note*.]

" The conference, and the consequent prayer of " these two saints, both so near heaven, were suffi- " cient to convince any one, that it is better to go " to the house of mourning, than to the house of " feasting. I never before understood so well the " meaning of the apostle's triumphant song, *O* " *Death, where is thy sting! O Grave, where is thy* " *victory!*'

" An hour or more of the latter part of the day " was spent by Theophilus in his favourite and only " amusement, of cultivating a small spot of his gar- " den, which he did occasionally, more for the pur- " pose of promoting health than labour. In the " evening, as in the morning, a considerable portion " of time was spent in private devotion and study, " which, after a little interval, was succeeded by

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* " Tu intrare me non sinas
" Infernales officinas;
" Ubi mœror, ubi metus,
" Ubi fœtor, ubi fletus;
" Ubi probra deteguntur,
" Ubi rei confunduntur;
" Ubi tortor semper cædens,
" Ubi vermis semper edens;
" Ubi totum hoc perenne,
" Quia perpes mors Gehennæ.
" Me receptet Sion illa,
" Sion David urbs tranquilla;
" Cujus Faber auctor lucis,
" Cujus porta signum crucis;
" Cujus clavis lingua Petri,
" Cujus cives semper læti;
" Cujus muri lapis vivus,
" Cujus custos rex festivus.
" In hac urbe lux solemnis,
" Ver æternum, pax perennis;
" In hac, odor implens cœlos,
" In hac, festum semper me-
" los.
" Non est ibi corruptela,
" Non defectus, non querela:
" Non minuti, non deformes,
" Omnes Christo sunt confor-
" mes,
" Urbs cœlestis, urbs beata!
" Super petram collocata.
" Urbs in portu satis tuto!
" De longinquo te saluto:
" —Te saluto, te suspiro,
" Te affecto, te requiro.
" Quantum tui gratulentur!
" Quam festive conviventur!
" Quis affectus eos stringat,
" Aut quæ gemma muros cin-
" gat,
" Quis Chalcedon, quis Jacin-
" tus,
" —Norunt illi qui sunt intus.
" In plateis hujus urbis,
" Sociatur piis turbis.
" Cum Moise et Elija
" Pium cantem Alleluja!"

"the worship of the family, in the manner described before. And, as the next day was the Sabbath, "the preparation for it began, by adjusting the affairs of the family a little sooner, and making the "devotions more particular in regard to it. On this "evening, too, a general retrospect was taken of "the week, as well as of the day, and the younger "and more ignorant of the family examined as to "their progress in religious knowledge, especially "in those matters which had been more particularly recommended to their attention.

"On the Sabbath morning, Theophilus and all "the family were up earlier than on other days, "in order to have more time for the exercise of "reading, meditation, prayer, private and domestic, and the other duties of that sacred day, the "most important of the seven. A solemn stillness "filled the house, a sacred joy reigned in every "countenance, and the call to public worship, by "the tolling of a bell when the time arrived, was "cheerfully obeyed by all. On entering the church, "every one seemed sensible of treading on sacred "ground, and discovered the most awful respect "for the great invisible Being whom they believed "to be in that place peculiarly present, and whom "they came thither to worship. Each, before he "took his seat, put up a short silent prayer to God "for assistance, acceptance, and a blessing.

"When the people were assembled, and sufficiently composed, the door was shut to prevent any distraction or disturbance from stragglers, or others, "whose indifference to the service might hinder their "attendance in due time. Theophilus then, in a "few words, called the attention of the congregation to the great and solemn work in which they "were about to engage,—prayer and praise to God. "He then sung a hymn or psalm, in which the congregation joined, in a standing posture, with coun-

" tenances filled with a mixture of cheerfulness and
" awe. A pause ensued, and then a prayer. A por-
" tion of scripture was next read, on which the mi-
" nister made but few observations. Indeed, the sa-
" cred scriptures seldom need many to make them
" sufficiently intelligible. We mix too much of our
" own alloy with the pure and precious word of
" God.

" After this was administered the sacrament of
" Baptism, with a solemnity and particularity of
" engagement that could neither be lightly thought
" of nor soon forgotten. Theophilus then, after
" having again sung and prayed, addressed his hear-
" ers at some length, by teaching some doctrine or
" inculcating some duty. But this part of the ser-
" vice, as I was told, he would on some rare occa-
" sions omit, that they might always consider the
" worship of God, in prayer, and praise, and read-
" ing the scriptures, as the principal end of their
" meeting. A fourth prayer, also accompanied with
" psalms, succeeded this discourse, and the people
" were dismissed with the usual apostolic benedic-
" tion. Of the first prayer, the greater part con-
" sisted of ascriptions of praise, and a craving of
" aid and acceptance. The second related to a con-
" fession of sin, and petitions for pardon and sanc-
" tification. The third, a thanksgiving, more espe-
" cially for Christ and the gracious benefits of his
" gospel. The fourth was more general and inter-
" cessory. The hymns were suitable to the prayers,
" and the last ended with the *Gloria Patri*, or doxo-
" logy.

" Immediately after public worship was ended, the
" communicants of that part of the parish which were
" on that day to partake of the Lord's Supper, re-
" paired to the communion table, after the rest of
" the congregation was dismissed. I must observe,
" that the parish being large, was divided into four

" parts; to one or other of which, in rotation, this " sacrament was administered on the first Sabbath " of every month (whether in allusion to the three " great feasts of the Jews, or not, I will not pretend " to say.) By this means, however, all had an op- " portunity of communicating thrice in every year; " and the quarter, whose turn it was to communicate " next, was always that in which the minister had " either his course of pastoral visits, or catechising " the month before; that he might thus have an " opportunity of addressing every person suitably, " and personally, while he gave them tokens, or " tickets of admission, to that sacred ordinance; " and especially of examining and confirming the " young with a view to it. By this method there " was never occasion for any assistant to dispense the " sacrament, and there was never any bustle, or " crowd to occasion any disturbance or distraction; " as too often happens when this sacrament is admi- " nistered but seldom, and ministers and congrega- " tions crowd to it, as to a fair, from neighbouring " places. In such mixed and disorderly crowds " there can be little devotion; and no body would " think it the fittest place for recollecting their obli- " gations to a dear departed relative.

" After a few words on the nature and end of " the ordinance, and the dispositions of soul with " which it should be gone about, the words of the " institution were read, and the elements consecrat- " ed and handed about from one end of the table " to the other, each, in his order, participating as " they went along, the dispenser having done so " first. During the communion, a solemn and ex- " pressive silence reigned. Theophilus spoke not a " word, save the single sentence which usually ac- " companies the delivery of the elements. But af- " ter the act was over, he gave a few exhorta- " tions, with the same earnestness and solemnity

" with which he performed all the other parts of " the service of the sanctuary, and accompanied " them with a suitable prayer, or rather thanks- " giving, hymn, and benediction.

" In holiness, usefulness, and happiness, Theophi- " lus lives on earth such a life as I conceive the an- " gels live in heaven. *Blessed is that servant whom* " *his master, when he cometh, shall find so doing!* " Would to God we were all like him, that we " might stand in his lot on the last day!"

## LECTURE XXVII.

### *Of the relaxations of a Minister of the Gospel.*

MUCH, my brethren, has been said about the various duties of our office, and much might be added still. But I think I already hear some brother of a light or a lazy turn of mind, ask, "Is there *no discharge* at all *from this warfare*; is there no respite at all from duty? Has a minister no time allowed him for relaxation from the important work in which he is engaged, or for sharing in the amusements and recreations of the world?

Sorry should I be, my brother, to refuse you any thing that may be truly good for you. Exercise and recreation in such a measure as your office may admit, and your health require, are not forbidden. But then, this exercise should be such as suits your character. It should be manly, decent, and grave; and should possess neither your mind nor your time too much, nor have any thing in it that may prejudice your people against you. For whatever would offend them would, at the same time, hurt your usefulness; and, therefore, though in itself indifferent or lawful, would in you be highly criminal. The apostle's reasoning on another subject is equally applicable to this, and his exhortation much to the purpose. *Take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if ye wound their weak consciences, ye sin against Christ.* With him, therefore, we should resolve to *abstain* from all such things *while the world standeth.**

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* 1 Cor. viii. 8—13.

Do you, my brother, regularly visit and catechise your people? If you do, this of itself is abundant exercise. But, should you wish for more, and find it requisite for your health to have it (which will rarely be the case,)* let it be of the character already mentioned, and taken in great moderation, that no body may have cause to suspect that any thing but health is your object. Let it also be in proper company. When Alexander was asked if he would run in the Olympic games; yes, answered he, if I may have kings to run with me.

To correct any bad tendency arising from a studious and sedentary life, should be the end of our recreations; and therefore such amusements only as contribute to give exercise to the body, while they relieve the mind, will be of any use to us. Gaming, and plays, or, in other words, dice, cards, and attendance on the theatre, and such other amusements as serve only to waste the time, poison the mind, or ruffle the temper, are to be carefully shunned by us. They answer many a bad purpose, and no good one. They are unsuitable to our profession, as ambassadors of Christ, and unsuitable to our character, as *men of God.* They might perhaps render us at times more agreeable to a few of the thoughtless and profane, who may wish to have us no better than

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* "Though I have a body that hath languished under many weaknesses for many years, and my diseases have been "such as require as much exercise as almost any in the "world, and I have found exercise the principal means of "my preservation till now, and therefore have as much reason to plead for it as any man that I know alive, yet I have "found, that an hour, or half an hour's walk before meat, "hath been blessed to my preservation. And I do not know "one minister of an hundred, that needeth so much as myself." *Baxter's Reformed Pastor.*

themselves; but would certainly tend to degrade us in the opinion of every considerate and pious person. Nay, let us ask ourselves, if our high esteem of the character of Isaiah, St. Paul, or any other prophet or apostle, would not be greatly lowered, if it were recorded of them, that they excelled in the dance or song, or were given to such diversions as dice, and cards, and attendance on the theatre? At any rate, we are members of a society, whose laws do wisely forbid all such diversions:* And these laws our ordination vows have strictly bound us to obey.

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* "Sic decet omnino clericos in fortem Domini vocatos "vitam moresque suos omnes componere, ut habitu, gestu, "incessu, sermone, aliisque omnibus rebus, nil nisi grave "moderatum, et religione plenum, præ se ferant. Levia "etiam delicta (quæ in ipsis maxima essent) effugiant, ut "eorum actiones cunctis afferant venerationem. Statuit "sancta synodus, ut quæ alias a summis pontificibus et a "sacris conciliis, de clericorum vita, honestate, cultu doc-"trinaque retinenda, ac simul de luxu, commessationibus, "choreis, aleis, ac quibuscunque criminibus, nec non se-"cularibus negotiis fugiendis, copiose, ac salubriter sancita "fuerunt, eadem in posterum, iisdem pœnis, vel majoribus, "arbitrio ordinarii imponendis, observentur: nec appella-"tio executionem hanc, quæ ad morum correctionem perti-"net, suspendat." *Concil. Trid. Sess.* 22. c. 1.

"Episcopus aut Presbyter seculares curas non adsumet; "alioqui deponatur." *Canon. Apost.* 6.

"Non sint compotores, non aleatores, non aucupes, non "venatores, non sycophantæ, non otiosi aut supini, sed "sacrarum literarum studiis, et prædicationi verbi, et ora-"tionibus pro ecclesia, Dominum diligenter incumbant." *Reform. Leg. Eccles. Angl. Anno* 1571.

"Deformatur honestas, cum clericus se immiscet in nego-"tiis secularibus. Item, intendo mimis et jocularibus. Item, "tabernas ingrediendo, nisi tempore itineris. Item, ad

That all such amusements as these are, at all times and to all persons, either unlawful or inexpedient, I do dot say. But that they are often so to many, and always so to some, cannot easily be denied. Every one, therefore, especially of us, who takes a share in them, should consider seriously the nature and tendency of what he is doing. Such amusements may not, perhaps, incline you, my brother, to passionate, much less profane expressions; they do not, perhaps, agitate your mind, sour your temper, or waste your spirits; they do not tempt you, perhaps, to any sort or degree of unfairness, which might weaken the moral sense, be the occasion ever so trifling. But see if they make you not mix with company, if not dangerous to you, at least unsuitable: See if they do not devour more time than is consistent with a due attention to the business of your station, public or private, or to the regular order of your family: See if they do not take up any part of the time which ought, or at least might be spent to better purpose, in a religious recollection of your ways, or any other improvement of your own soul, or those of others, in piety and virtue. These amusements may not, perhaps, carry you the length they do many others, to consume a greater part of your income, than justice

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"aleas et taxillos ludendo, vel eisdem interessendo. Item, "quocunque ornatu superfluo utendo." *Lindwood de vi et honest. Clerici.*

"It is ordained, That such as are light and wanton in their "behaviour; as in gorgeous and light apparel, in speech, in "using light and profane company; unlawful gaming, as "dancing, carding, dicing, and such like, not beseeming the "gravity of a pastor, be sharply rebuked, and, continuing "therein, be deposed." *Act. Assemb.* 1638.

On reading these acts, every pious brother will say, as St. Jerome on a similar occasion, "Non de lege queror, sed do "leo cur hanc legem meruerimus."

to your creditors, to your family, and to the poor, will allow. Even say they should cost you nothing; yet see if they do not engage your heart, and that a fondness for them does not grow upon you; see if they do not lower your character, and lessen your usefulness and ability of doing good in the world. Or, suppose what can hardly or never be the case, that they do yourself no harm at all, yet, if by your means they do harm to others, enticing the well-meaning, by your example, to any thing, which, in itself, or in their circumstances, may be either unlawful or unwise, you are, without question, much to be blamed, and likely to be a partaker of other men's sins. So that, all things impartially considered, you will see that there is an absolute necessity, if you would keep yourself free from guilt, to abstain entirely from such amusements as these, which, to yourself or others, may be productive of so much evil.*

Whatever approaches the vanities and disorders of the world, should be avoided by us, who ought not to be conformed to the world, but rather transformed from it. Yes, the amusements of the world, with all it's business, it's labours, and it's cares, ought all to be given up by us, unless we mean to give up our profession, and to be lovers of business, or of pleasure, more than lovers of God. What are these, may Christ say to his minister, what are these to thee? *Follow thou me. Be going about doing good,* and you are at once in the exercise both of duty and amusement. Relax, at times, the mind from graver studies, by reading the historians and poets, by seeking more knowledge in any science that may be connected with, or subservient to your office, by applying that knowledge to the purposes of life, by advancing the temporal, and especially the eternal interests of mankind. Such amusement, in subordination and sub-

* See Archbishop Secker's Sermons, Vol. III.

serviency to the duties of your calling, is rational and becoming; and more, if you wish, or rather if you need it, may be had from the conversation of select friends, and from your garden, which may have some share of your time, when your study and your parish will admit it.

This much, my brethren, our Master and our business allow us, and with this we ought to hold ourselves contented and thankful. In other religions, the infatuated ministers spend whole years in the most painful and unremitting exercise of what they conceive to be duty, though they want the grace which we have to support them, and the prospects which we have to cheer them. It is now above twenty years, since a disciple of Brama, as I have been told by those who saw him, has been holding up his right arm in the same position. How easy, in comparison of this, is the whole amount of duty required of us, who are called to bear a yoke so easy, and a burden so light, that it would be considered as no more than relaxation by Abukeker the Bramin.*

Yes, my brethren, as much relaxation as nature requires, is happily furnished by our business, and we should do well to consider if any more becomes us. If we must have more, we should not have thrust ourselves into that calling, which requires us to make God and his work our business and our pleasure. Can we indeed see so many souls perishing around us, needing our assistance, and death giving no respite, and can we think of amusement, and relaxation! Can we think of the joy, or torment, to which some of them are every moment entering, of the shortness of the time which we and they must be together, and

* "In christian hearts, O for a pagan zeal!
"A needful, but opprobrious pray'r! As much
"Our ardour less, as greater is our light!" YOUNG.

can we, under the impression of such thoughts, seek or think of recreation! May a physician seek his recreation, when the plage is raging around him, and his patients daily and hourly dying of the distemper? No, my brethren; nor shall we, if we think of the value of souls, of their imminent danger, and of the urgent nature of our errand. This urgency is strongly represented by our Saviour's charge to his first missionaries, not to lose of precious time so much as to wait to salute those who should meet them by the way.* A life so busy as ours ought to be, has seldom any room for recreation. Nay, we should even take as little rest as possible, either to body or to soul. The body will soon get enough of it in the grave, and for the soul, there remaineth a rest with God, if we are diligent in the discharge of our duty.

Diversions and amusements, then, are so little suited to our office, that we may perhaps be considered as acting out of character, when at any time we partake of them. If a church, or altar, consecrated to sacred uses, would be profaned by being converted to a theatre, or stage for acting plays or sports, as the sacred cups of the temple at the impious feast of Belshazzar, how can the priest himself, who is in a more solemn manner consecrated and devoted to God, be otherwise than polluted, by partaking of those diversions, by which we should consider even metal, timber, and stone as profaned? We should therefore remember that we are consecrated persons, and that even things that may not be sinful in others, are far from becoming in us; to whom things even innocent and lawful may not always be expedient. We should not satisfy ourselves with avoiding the things that are forbidden, but strive to do the things that are commanded. We should not consider what God may

* Luke x. 4.

forgive, but what he will approve; and study not only to escape censure and punishment, but to obtain his praise and reward. And whether this may be expected from any diversion or amusement, be you, my brethren, judges.

We are, besides, to consider ourselves as persons in whom the Holy Ghost resides; and in relation to this, we ought frequently to consider what we do, as well as what we are. And we should do well to consider, if any diversion or amusement be a likely way to invite his presence, or make him delight to dwell with us. If these be not sinful in their nature, yet they may be vain and foolish, and therefore unsuitable to our character, and incompatible with the presence of the Holy Spirit. In this, does the Spirit lead me? For this, does the spirit love me? By this, am I inviting and improving his holy inspirations? By such questions, it will be our wisdom to try our ways and our doings.

Look, my brethren, to your predecessors and your models, the prophets and apostles of the Lord, and see if the love of diversions and amusements were spots in their character. Or, consider the fatigues and hardships just now endured by your brethren, who preach the gospel in heathen countries and in foreign climes. They have forsaken father, and mother, and brother, and friend, and hold their lives every hour in jeopardy. And will not you, free from these hardships, seek pleasure and delight, not in vain amusements, but in serving God with gladness, for making your duty so much easier, and making your lines to fall in more pleasant places? Think also of the multitudes who are doomed to toil and slave daily from morning to night, in order to obtain a scanty and precarious subsistence; and then think, if kind providence hath exempted you from these hardships, which have fallen to the share of so many, whether you ought not to improve the distinguished

mercy, not by wasting your Master's time and talents in idleness and amusement, but by devoting them zealously to his service, and spending them in the exercise of devotion and of charity; in attending to all the ways and means of doing good that are in your power; and in exalting your own souls, and those of others, to the highest possible degrees of christian perfection.

Let none allege that these are *hard sayings*, and that none can bear them; for experience shows that I contend for no more than may be easily performed. A very large denomination of christians find it practicable enough to "refrain from all unprofitable "plays, frivolous recreations, sportings, and gamings, "which are invented to pass away precious time."* And shall ministers complain of being denied what ordinary christians are willing to dispense with? If they do, I dare not condemn them, any more than I would pretend to justify them. I shall only say, that amusements, even when most innocent in their nature, and moderate in their measure, are far from being favourable to our sacred business. Their tendency is to weaken the powers of the soul, and to relax that spring, with which it exerts itself in it's noblest functions. Diversion is by no means a proper preparation for prayer, meditation, or any other religious exercise. On the contrary, it takes away, if not the capacity, at least the relish for devotion; and from this the transition is short and easy to a dislike and aversion to every thing sacred and serious. Whereas the exercise of our intellectual, social, and moral powers, in thinking, and conversing as rational and immortal beings, improve and enlarge our noblest faculties, qualify us for every act of our duty, give us the highest satisfaction in the discharge of it, and the sublimest pleasure on reflection. In these,

* Barclay's Apology for the Quakers, Prop. 15.

and the like exercises, therefore, should we occupy ourselves, if we wish for any delight that is solid and lasting. And whatever our relaxation be, we should study to make it useful as well as innocent. The one is common, the other is consecrated; the one is amusement, the other is charity; and I need not say which will give most pleasure here, or most profit hereafter, when all our *works shall be tried as by fire.*

Wherefore, my brethren, "if at any time we share "in any of those amusements that are deemed the "most innocent, we should remember, that we are "even then on slippery ground, and in great danger "of going farther than we ought; in great danger "of going farther than is innocent in us, and farther "than becomes our character. For we should be "attentive to serious reflection in the midst of gaiety, "and seize on every opportunity of promoting what "is right, where too generally what is wrong abounds. "If we cannot always, and altogether keep free of "idle amusements, and idle conversation (by which "I mean no more than what is generally deemed to "be innocent), we should at least participate of them "so seldom, and so little, as to show the world that "our happiness consists in quite a different matter. "For if, instead of being grave, and studious, and "laborious in our profession, we dissipate our-"selves in vanities, or sink into luxurious indo-"lence, the awe of our character, the influence of "our example, and the weight of our preaching, "will be lost. The thoughtless will imagine, that they "may safely step a little farther than we, and then "fall into palpable sin; while the indifferent to reli-"gion and virtue will make it their boast, that we "aim to be as like them as for shame we can, and "will blaspheme, on that account, the worthy name "by which we are called."

"Even talking with pleasure and delight of the "diversions and amusements of the world, discovers

" a fondness for them more than is consistent with our " character and office. Having almost any know- " ledge of them, implies that we have studied, and " that we love them; at least, it will be so construe- " ed by mankind, from whom we are not, in such " matters, to look for the most favourable construc- " tions. And yet the success of our ministry de- " pends on their thinking well of us, which they " will be so far from doing on this account, that al- " most all of them, however much addicted to " such amusements themselves, will be sure to cen- " sure us, if we follow them. Even those which are " most reputable and lawful, may be far from expe- " dient for us, who ought to set our people a pattern " of employing their precious time to higher and bet- " ter purpose. A minister of God's Word, attentive " to his duty, will neither have leisure for such dissi- " pations, public or private, nor any liking to them. " He will see that pleasure, or rather a wretched af- " fectation of it, is become the idol of mankind, to " which they are sacrificing their fortunes, their " health, their reputations, their regard to God, to " their social duties, to the state of their souls, to " their future being. Now, what are the clergy to " do in such a case? If we but seem to go along " with them, who shall call them back? For, as " to the pretence of keeping them within bounds, " it is visibly a mere pretence. Or, were it not, " the older and graver of us would surely think " such a superintendancy no very honourable one; " and few of the younger and livelier could be safely " trusted with it. Indeed, we none of us know " what effect such *evil communications* would produce " on our *manners* and dispositions. With regard to " others, however, I do not mean we should be sour " or morose, or condemn those relaxations which " they deem to be innocent. It is best to express our

" dislike of them as mildly as the case will bear ; " slight, with good humour, the indulgences in which " they place their happiness, and convince them, by " our experience as well as reasoning, how very com- " fortably they might live without them*."

A minister, endowed with the spirit of his office, considers his duty as his highest, and, indeed, his only pleasure. Habit, which is every thing, gives him that pleasure in duty, which others find in their sports and pastimes. Even the attending on the sick and dying, which, to an ungracious minister, is disagreeable and irksome, is more desirable to him than any scene of gaiety and amusement. He deems it *better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting*, on account of the good he may receive, the good he may do, and the comfort he may give to a soul in trouble. To the house of mourning, therefore, and to the bed of sickness, he repairs, as to scenes of spiritual pleasure, as well as to discharge his duty. And, while thus engaged, he misses not the pleasures of the world ; he misses not even the joys of heaven, if we may judge from the case of Fillan. Fillan, who ministered such consolation to the children of affliction, that he was called the healer of diseases, professed that no part of his ministry was so agreeable to him, as to visit the afflicted. If the angel of distress, or death, knocked at any door within his district, the first that heard, and the next that knocked, was Fillan. At length the hour of his own departure came, and the convoy of angels received his spirit. Borne on their wings, he flew towards heaven, and saw the portals already open, when a ministering spirit passed them downward, on his way to visit a saint in prison. That is like entering this paradise, said Fillan, looking wistfully after him, as if he envied him his errand. Angels almost

* Archbishop Secker's Charges.

blamed him for having said so ; but God immediately ordained him to be a minister of mercy. Go, said he, and divert the storm that rages on the earth, lest that desart tract before it perish. To do thy will, in errands of mercy, is the essence of heaven to me, said Fillan, as he flew, with the speed of a sunbeam, to turn the course of the tempest. But hearing the moan of distress as he passed over a cottage, Fillan, as he was wont, would stop, though but a moment, to minister consolation to a soul, whose painful trial was about to cease for ever. In that moment, by a sudden commotion of earth and ocean, the desart sunk and perished. Fillan blushed as he returned ; angels trembled for his fate ; and the first sons of light were afraid to look at the throne of God. But God remembered the habits of Fillan's life, and said, *Blessed is the merciful!*

And blessed, my brethren, and happy should we be, in the exercise of our duty, did we thus love to discharge it, and consider every part of it, not as a task, but as an honour and a pleasure, then should we look for opportunities of usefulness, instead of amusement, and fill, alike with duty and with pleasure, every day and hour of our fleeting life.* But, if any call this a *hard saying*, I say it only to those choice spirits who can bear it. To others I say, that relaxation, upon the whole, is allowed them ; yet not what the world falsely calls by that name ; not that relaxation which destroys the most valuable of our talents, TIME, without answering any useful purpose. For we are stewards, and, therefore, not our

* "Live while you live, the epicure would say,
"And snatch the pleasures of the present day.
"Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,
"And give to God each moment as it flies.
"Lord! in my views let both united be,
"I live to pleasure while I live to thee." DODDRIDGE.

own ; neither are our time and talents. These are all of them the property of our Master, and should be devoted to his service, in the edification of our people. Our relaxation on this account, should be suited to our character as ministers of the gospel, and followers of Jesus. It should consist in the exercise of *going about doing good ;* and, sometimes, if it please us, in the culture of a spot of garden, or any such exercise, moderately taken, and, at the same time, grave, athletic, and unexceptionable. It should consist in the pursuit of other branches of useful science, that may be allied to our business, in the small measure that matters of more importance will allow. It should, especially, consist in the edifying conversation and society of true christians. Such was the relaxation of Jesus himself, the great Pattern of our life and ministry ; and such must be ours, if we are his true disciples. To expect it from any thing else unconnected with our duty, is absurd. To seek it in the world, is dangerous. It is not there ; *Why seek we the living among the dead ?*

" Is the world, my brethren, a proper place of re-
" creation to a minister of Jesus Christ ? *How shall*
" *we sing a song in a strange land* (said the Jewish
" captives to the people of Babylon,) where the God
" of our fathers is not known, where his friendship
" is despised, and his prophets without honour ? And
" would it be recreation to us, my brethren, to see
" religion despised, our Saviour dishonoured, and
" our brethren, for whom Christ died, perishing,
" and squandering away thoughtlessly the few mo-
" ments of grace allowed them by heaven for secur-
" ing their salvation ? The world knew not Christ ;
" the world hated his disciples ; and his disciples bid
" his followers guard against the world. Paul bids
" us not to be conformed to it ; John bids us not to
" love it. Job, Moses, David, Elijah, and others, *of*
" *whom the world was not worthy,* were rieved in it,

" grew sick of it, and wished to leave it. And shall " we look for recreation where these holy men were " tired of life, and where all who live godly in Christ " Jesus meet with much tribulation ? We may look " for it, but shall not find it."

" The world, my brethren, is a place of snares " and dangers, where we run much risk of being " hurt or infected. While we are in it, we breathe " in tainted air ; and though we associate only with " the most regular, yet, when amusement, and not " duty, calls us, their maxims, by degrees, weaken " our sense of duty ; their false wisdom seduces, " and their imperfect manners gain us.* Much " of our time is taken up in conversation, which is, " at best, but idle. Vain thoughts occupy our " minds, and they recur upon our memories. We " insensibly conform to our company, and depart " from the sanctity which becomes our lives, and " the gravity which becomes our character. When " duty calls us to mix with the world, then provi- " dence protects, as it did Peter, when his Master " called to him to tread the deep. Examine there- " fore, whenever you mix with the world, if duty " calls you ? if it is for the good of men, and the " glory of God ? Is it his work you are going to do? " Is it charity that brings you to comfort the afflict " ed, to strengthen the weak ; to edify the saint, to " gain the sinner ? Or is it your zeal to follow in " private the instructions you have been giving in " public ; to entertain by heavenly discourses ; or to " bring the peace of Christ to families ? Is it your

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* " Qui ambulat in sole coloratur,
" Qui tangit picem inquinatur :
" Aere calido calescimus,
" Et rursus frigido frigescimus.
" Tu cum sanctis sanctus eris,
" Cum perversis perverteris."

" watchfulness to reprove, rebuke, exhort, encourage?
" Look up, and you will find it was so with your
" Master. If he manifested himself in a village of
" Jewry, it was to do the work of his Father; if
" at a marriage, it was to show his power, and gain
" authority to his doctrine; if in the house of a publi-
" can, it was to save a child of Abraham; if at Jerusa-
" lem on the feast-day, it was to purge the temple.*"
In a word, to glorify God, and to do good to souls, was his meat and his drink, his work and his recreation. And the closer we follow his example, the greater shall be our happiness and usefulness here, and the greater shall be our glory and reward hereafter. *Those things, therefore, which we have both learned, and received, and heard of him, let us do, and the God of peace shall be with us.*

* See Massillon's Discourses to his Clergy.

## LECTURE XXVIII.

*That Ministers ought rigidly to observe the laws respecting Ordination and the Discipline of their Order.*

HAVING said so much of the duty of the clergy, towards the people, it may be proper to say a little of those studies which they ought to observe among themselves. These respect either the admission of members into their order, or the maintaining of discipline among them after they are admitted. These are matters of such vast importance, as to merit our attention in the highest degree. Accordingly, we find our Saviour spending a whole night in prayer, before he called or ordained his apostles; and we find the apostles in like manner, praying for direction from heaven, when filling the place of Judas. We likewise find, that christians, in general, are more than once directed to pray to God, that he would send faithful labourers into his vineyard. Could any thing give us a higher idea of the great importance of the sacred office? We cannot possibly use too much caution in the licensing or ordaining of those who are candidates.

Of all the trusts which God hath put into our hands, my brethren, this is of the most importance, as it is the most extensive, in it's consequences, to mankind. The laws of our church, therefore, respecting this matter, ought to be always observed with the most scrupulous rigour. No consideration whatever ought to prevail with us to depart from the least *iota* of these laws; for that would be to prejudice the cause of the gospel. Neither friendship

nor compassion, nor interest, nor importunity, should move us to bring any into the church, who is not (as we firmly believe in our conscience,) in every respect, duly qualified for it's service. Friendship for any man in this respect, is enmity to God ; compassion to an individual is cruelty, and the worst cruelty too, to the community ; and to be remiss or easy in admitting such as ought to have neither lot nor part in this matter, is to become partakers of other men's sins, and to be, in a great measure, answerable for the harm which they do to souls, the disgrace which they bring on their office, the hurt which they do to religion, and the mischiefs which they bring on the church of God. Yes, my brethren, we keep the door of the sanctuary, and we must, therefore, answer to God and the souls of men, for such as we unwarrantably let in. On this account, the longer we know them, the more we examine into their views, their knowledge, parts, and character ; and the greater the variety of trials through which we make them pass, the more we secure our own peace of conscience, the dignity and character of the order, and the interest of God and religion in the world.

We must be cautious of admitting any who have not devoted themselves early to the service of God, and to the study of the scriptures, and received such education as qualifies them for the ministry ; that is, such education as qualifies them for being useful to souls, not only by the measure of their knowledge, but also by the practical power of their doctrine, and the commanding influence of an holy and exemplary conduct. We must examine if they have been remarked for a strong early and persevering passion for study ; without which, no excellence in this office is ever to be expected or attained. We must observe, that they be not novices, but are come to the age in which their character may be supposed to be fully

formed, and their habits decidedly marked.* We must observe, that they be distinguished by their prudence, as well as by the sanctity of their manners, and that they evince a heart filled with love to God and to mankind. We must especially observe, that they be possessed of those qualifications which the word of God requires in such as would be teachers of the religion of Jesus; that they be "blameless as the "stewards of God, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, "and of good report; not self-willed, not soon an- "gry, not given to wine or strong drink; no braw- "lers or strikers; not given to filthy lucre; but just, "holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word, and "able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to con- "vince the gainsayers; in all things showing them- "selves patterns of good works, and examples to the "believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in "spirit, in faith, in purity, in gravity, in sincerity; "studious and laborious, not neglecting any gift that "is in them, but giving themselves wholly to their "work, and taking heed to themselves and to their "doctrine, that they may save their own souls, and "those that hear them. They must be *men of God*, "following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, "patience, meekness; they must be lovers of good "men, fleeing youthful lusts, avoiding foolish strifes "and debates; gentle, patient, apt to teach; in meek- "ness instructing those that oppose themselves; and, "in a word, doing all the work of an evangelist, and "making full proof of their ministry."†

We must examine diligently, that candidates for the ministry be well acquainted with the sacred scriptures; that they be trained in them from their youth, and that they have committed the most useful and

* The Levitical law fixed this at thirty: And, at that age our Saviour begun his public ministry.

† See the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

practical parts of them to memory, in order to be richly furnished for being able ministers of the New Testament. We must likewise examine, whether their education has been all along calculated more for solid utility than mere show and speculation; and take care that their whole life, so far as it is possible for us to know, exhibit the most striking examples of piety and virtue. For no person who is not himself a model of piety and divine love, is qualified for being a public teacher of piety, or a guide to others in the way of salvation. How can he teach who has not learned; how can he recommend virtue who loves vice; or how can he lead others to heaven who walks himself another way? If Plato would have none made heathen priests but such as were "descended of pious parents, and had "always the best education and example, and were "free both from every bodily imperfection and from "every moral stain offensive to God, and incompa- "tible with the sanctity of their character," shall we not hold the christian priesthood worthy of at least the same regard?

The stress which this philosopher places on the circumstance of priests being descended of pious parents, is a matter highly deserving our attention. The principle of imitation will naturally lead the children of such parents to copy their example, by which they have the vast benefit of acquiring those early habits of virtue which make the most lasting impression on the soul, and which probably give it much of it's colouring through time and through eternity. Independent, indeed, of this effect of example and imitation, it may be observed, that children often inherit a certain cast of mind, as well as of body, from their parents, so as to resemble them generally in the principal features of the one as well as of the other. Thus, solidity and sense is the characteristic of one family; levity and folly of another Thus, too, as some families are distinguished for

their mechanic, and some for their poetic, so others for their pious and virtuous turn of mind. It is, therefore, a very desirable circumstance, that candidates for the ministry should be descended of pious parents, as their original advantages, in this respect, give no inconsiderable security for their good behaviour in the sacred office.

After this diligent enquiry into the education, piety, and knowledge (and, I would wish to add, with Plato, into the pious parentage also) of every candidate, we ought also to enquire into his veiws, that the fault may not be ours, if these be wrong. He ought, therefore, "to be posed, upon his conscience, "before the great God, and that in the most solemn "manner, to declare what moveth him to accept of "this office, and to take upon him the charge of the "ministry*."

Nor is this all: We must take care, that candidates for the sacred office have a fund of good sense and parts, as well as knowledge, piety, and a good intention. A weak and well meaning man may fill any other office rather than this, which is the most important of all, and which requires more than an ordinary degree of perfection to discharge it properly. The Levitical law excluded from the priesthood all such as were lame, maimed, or deformed in body; and shall we admit into the christian, such as are deficient or lame in any endowment of the mind†? If we do, how shall we answer it to our conscience; how shall we answer it to our God; how shall we answer it to the souls that perish through the misconduct, incapacity, or weakness, of

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* Act. Assemb. 1638.

† "From such apostles, O ye mitred heads,
"Preserve the church! and lay not careless hands
"On skulls that cannot teach, and will not learn."
COWPER.

those who should teach and guide them? No, my brethren, let us not dare to entrust the flock of Christ to those whom we would scarce entrust with the keeping of our cattle, or with the management of our worldly affairs, if they required any considerable share of prudence and ability. Let us not deprive society of the service of such persons, in some lower department that may fit them; nor let us injure souls, by putting them in the room that should be filled by able and useful pastors.

But it is not only to the admission of members to the sacred office that we ought to attend. We must also watch over one another with a holy jealousy, after getting in, lest the enemy get advantage over us. We must lay aside that false delicacy and mistaken tenderness, which would hinder us from admonishing a brother when he is in fault, and so preventing evils in the beginning, which the severest discipline may not afterwards amend. But then, amidst the calumnies of the world (of which the ministers of religion often get their share,) we should be careful not to blame a brother without sufficient reason; nor, without necessity, tell other men what we are even then obliged to think of him. We should be ready to show all proper kindness to him, even when blameable, and to receive him with tenderness, if, without obliging us to proceed to extremity, he returns to duty. But, if brotherly admonition does not amend him, we must then, however reluctantly, proceed, according to our laws, to the other steps of discipline; and, for the sake of preserving the health of the rest of the body, cut off, like wise physicians, the limb that cannot be healed. The interests of religion are never so materially concerned as in the preserving of the purity of it's ministers. Lose this, and you lose your authority, influence and respect, and, of consequence, your usefulness in your Master's service. Lose this,

and you lose your own souls, and destroy those of others. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance, that we execute, with impartiality, and even with rigour, the laws of discipline respecting our own order. Neither friendship, nor favour, nor pity, must, at any time, move us to wink at the faults of a brother, or to screen him from the lash of discipline, when he deserves to feel it. In this respect, we must, with Levi, *neither acknowledge our brethren, nor know our own children.* Whatever relation or regard we bear to them, that which we bear to God and our own souls is stronger. "I have a regard for Socrates," said the philosopher, "and I have a regard for Plato; "but I have a still greater regard for truth and duty."

We must, therefore, I say, my brethren, watch over one another continually, with a holy jealousy; and, when we cannot prevent faults, endeavour, by a strict and impartial exercise of discipline, to correct the offender; and, if we cannot amend him, at least remove him from his office. We must do all in our power to provoke one another to love and to good works, and to be as useful as we can in the church of God. We must frequently converse and consult with one another about the means of promoting knowledge and piety; remembering, that on our diligence in this work, under God, depends the salvation of thousands still living in ignorance under our pastoral charge. Nay, further, on our diligence in this work, depends our salvation also. It should, therefore, occupy our thoughts when alone and should, when we meet, be the great subject of our conversation.

We must do all that lieth in us to strengthen each other's hands, and to maintain, among ourselves, peace, love, and unanimity. Like the bundle of rods in the fable, our strength is great only when we are united. Intent with all our heart and

soul upon our Master's work, our common business, let us consider every other thing as of little moment, and totally unworthy of our serious concern; so shall we have little occasion to differ much in opinion. Or if, at any time, we should differ in opinion about trifles (and about trifles it is that we almost always do so*), let us never do it but in meekness and love; leaving all intemperate heat and animosity to those who serve another master. *Let our moderation be known to all men;* for *the wrath of man,* we know, *worketh not the righteousness of God.* Let us remember, that we, who endeavour to compose and remove the differences of others, ought, if possible, to have none of our own.

But, (I say it again, my brethren) if disputes should at any time unhappily arise, let us never pursue them keenly, nor maintain them long. Let us, if possible, love and respect those from whom we think ourselves obliged to differ, and do them the justice, which we expect from them, to believe that they act from conscience, as we do ourselves. Let us judge of whatever they say or do with charity. Let us judge of the matter in dispute with modesty; for it is possible we are not qualified to judge of it at all. And, whatever be our opinion, let us act in such a manner, as may secure to us the approbation of God, and the esteem of all good men. Any thing different from this *meekness of wisdom,* would hurt our character, hurt our cause, and hurt religion It would give the world occasion to believe, that

* *Arist.* "But amidst our ecclesiastical feuds, with what "party will you side?

*Theot.* "With none. Virtue never occasions any dispute, "because it comes from God: All these heart-burnings are "about opinions which are the inventions of men.

*Arist.* "Excellent! I wish all priests were like you."

*Vol. Dict. Phil.*

whatever we profess, we are not indeed the disciples of him, who is the *Prince of peace*, and who required of all his disciples, to *have peace among themselves**.

* Mark. ix. 50.

## LECTURE XXIX.

### *Address to Candidates for the Ministry.*

"HE who intends to dedicate himself to the sacred "office, ought early to devote himself to the strict- "est piety and virtue, that he may not be vitiated "by any ill habit, which it may not afterwards be "easy for him to lay aside. He ought, above all "things, to possess himself with a high sense of the "christian religion, of it's truth and excellency, of "the value of souls, of the dignity of the pastoral "care, of the honour of God, of the sacredness of "holy functions, and of the great trust that is com- "mitted to those who are set apart from the world, "and dedicated to God and to his church. He "who looks this way, must mortify himself to the "appetites of pleasure, and wealth, and honour, and "power. He must consider, that the relation in "which he intends to officiate, calls every one who "enters upon it to the greatest holiness and virtue; "to a purity and innocency of manners, to a meek- "ness and gentleness, to a humility and self-denial, "to a contempt of the world, and a heavenly-mind- "edness, to a patient resignation to the will of God, "and a readiness to bear the cross, and follow his "Master, through good report and bad report, in "hopes of that everlasting reward which awaits him "in another world*." And when you, my young brethren, are about to consecrate yourselves to this important work, I hope you have examined before God, whether you have these dispositions; or, in

* Burnet's Pastoral Care.

other words, whether he hath called you to his service. I hope you can say in truth, that you "trust "you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to "take upon you this office, to serve God for the "promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his "people*." You will not, I trust, give God cause to complain of you, as he did of some of the false prophets of old, *I have not sent them, and yet they run.* This would be a crime of such enormity as you would not choose, I am persuaded, to be guilty of. For, "if a man pretend a commission from a "prince, or indeed from any person, and, in conse-"quence of it, acts in his name, the law will punish "him; and shall the great God of heaven and earth "be thus vouched, and his having moved them be "pretended by those whom he has neither called nor "sent? Or, shall he not reckon with those who dare 'run without his mission, pretending that they have "it, when they never perhaps examined into it's im-"portance, nor startled at the thoughts of becoming "sacrilegious profaners of the name of God, and of "his Holy Spirit† ?"

But of you, my young brethren, I hope better things. Human motives, I hope, are not those which influence you in your choice. The glory of God, and the salvation of souls, I trust, are the great end and aim you have in view. Gladly, then, will I address each of you, as Laban did Eliezer, *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without?* It is of such labourers that the Lord hath need in his vineyard, and, on the prospect of having such for our fellow-labourers, we exceedingly rejoice.

But, on the other hand, if you have not examined yourselves, and found that you have a single eye to the glory of God, enter not the sacred place in which

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* Eng. Liturgy. † Past. Care.

his honour dwells. Keep back, lest he ask you, *What have you to do to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant into your mouth?* If it is from selfish and worldly motives that you thrust yourselves into the sacred office, you are not the servants of Christ, but the slaves of your own corrupt passions, the slaves of the very worst ambition. All your concern is to get a tolerable maintenance, a comfortable subsistence in the world. Like the *unjust steward*, you are perhaps unwilling to dig, and to beg you are ashamed; therefore you turn your thoughts to this, as a very convenient employment. So it was in the degenerate times of the church of old. Men would *crouch for a piece of silver, and say, Put me, I pray thee, in the priest's office, that I may eat a piece of bread.* Hence the grievous complaint, that *the priests taught for hire, and the prophets divined for money.*

It is true, God hath ordained, that *they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel*, and have a sufficient maintenance provided for them; and the injustice of withholding this from them, may be one of the most crying sins of the times.* Although this be their right, it should not be their motive.† When it is, it soon leads to avarice, and to an inordinate love of the world; the most sordid passion to which human nature ever stoops. In scripture, we find pious and regenerate persons fallen into many sins, but, as it has been often observed, none of them into this. This is a spot never to be found in God's children; and proves more fatal than leprosy or plague, to

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* Mal. iii. 8—10.

† The late Dr. Johnson, when in indigent circumstances, was offered a rectory if he would enter into orders. But this great and good man, sensible, as it is supposed, of the asperity of his temper, declined it; saying, "I have not the requisites for the office, and I cannot in my conscience shear the flock which I am unable to feed."

those infected with it's poison. The sin which carried Judas to his own place, was avarice. The sin which made Demas forsake the church was avarice. The sin most directly opposite to that largeness of soul and generosity of sentiment, which the gospel inspires, is avarice. What a contradiction, then, must it be in a minister of the gospel? What a debasement of his character to yield to it? It is as if a king should descend from his throne to sit on the dunghill. Besides, this is a sin which is seldom found alone. Whoever is capable of it, is capable of any evil.* It renders a minister, especially, indifferent to the salvation or damnation of the souls of whom he has the charge. He is occupied only about the sordid and temporal profits to be derived from his office, instead of using that evangelical earnestness, which almost borders on compulsion, to make people leave their farms, and their oxen, and accept of the gospel invitation; he forgets that he was sent out on this errand, and minds his farm, and his oxen himself, as much as they do. And if THE KING resented so highly, that the persons who were bidden made light of his invitation, with how much greater severity will he treat that servant, who, neglecting his business, and betraying his trust, joins in their madness, and remains along with them! If they are treated as ingrates, he must be treated as a rebel. He goes forth to war against the world; and with the world he joins in league against his master.

When a minister coldly commends the things that are heavenly, and warmly pursues the things that are earthly, who can believe him to be in earnest? Who will not rather consider him as a mere player,

> Who acts upon the stage an hour or two
> In an unreal character; and then
> Throws off the mask, and reassumes his own?

* Quid non mortalia pectora cogis,
Auri sacra fames!

How can this man's labours in the ministry be otherwise than lost? but his having lost his labour, and his having passed his life without ever gaining one soul to Christ, is not what affects him. This, without any complaint, he can bear with perfect patience. But what he laments is, that his function brought him no more of that filthy lucre, for which he served. Hence the source of all his grief; here the balance in which all his losses are weighed.

What then shall we say to these things? If Jesus drove the traffickers out of the temple, how will he permit such a wretch as this to enter into it? He may permit it (for he acts sometimes in the way of judgment as well as mercy,) but permit it with impunity he will not. He is a jealous God, and will never suffer any one to enter his temple, in order to bow down to an idol. This, in any man, would be the most heinous profanity; but, in a minister, the most horrid impiety. It would be a bold defiance to the Deity, and, as it were, an open challenge to grasp his thunder. Why should you then, my young friends, allow yourselves to be thus impelled to your destruction by worldly motives? *What shall you be profited, if you gain the whole world* (of which, by the way, you can gain but very little) *and lose your own souls?* Lose your own souls! Yes, most infallibly. And what is there in the world, that should tempt you to run this dreadful hazard? "The *world*, believe it, "the *world* has *nothing* solid, *nothing* durable. It is "only a *fashion*, and a fashion, too, that *passeth* "*away*. Yes, sirs, the tenderest *friendships* end.— "*Honours* are specious titles, which time effaces. "*Pleasures* are amusements, which leave only a last- "ing and painful repentance. *Riches* are torn from "us by the violence of men, or elude us by their own "instability. *Grandeurs* moulder away of themselves. "*Glory* and renown at length lose themselves in the "abysses of an eternal oblivion. So rolls the torrent

" of this world, whatever pains are taken to stop it. " Every thing is carried away by a rapid train of pas- " sing moments; and by continual revolutions we " arrive, frequently, without thinking of it, at that " fatal point, where time finishes, and eternity begins! " Happy then the christian soul, who, obeying the " precept of Jesus Christ, loves not the world, nor " any thing that the world contains."*

But possibly, my young brethren, you may not look forward to this office from gainful motives, and yet your views may still be wrong. You may perhaps consider the temple of God as a place of repose, where you may loll your life away in ease and indolence.† Ah! my young brethren, how grossly are you mistaken! How little do you know of the many cares, fatigues, and perplexities, which attend the sacred function! These are so many, that under the weight of them (to use the words of one of the fathers) " the shoulders of angels themselves might " groan."

Ministers are in scripture designated by the names of rulers, teachers, stewards, shepherds, servants, watchmen, labourers, soldiers, and the like, all of them expressive of both great trust and great toil. Whoever would exercise any one of them aright, must have many wearisome days, and restless nights; much fatigue of body, and anxiety of mind. But when

* Archbishop Flechier.

† Erasmus laments, that in his time (and I fear it is so in ours) many young preachers greatly mistook the nature of their calling in this and other respects. ' Verum ad concio- ' nes sacras admittuntur, interdum etiam assiliunt adolescen- ' tes, leves, indocti, quasi nihil sit facilius quam apud populum ' exponere divinam scripturam, et abunde sufficiat perfricuis- ' se faciem, et absterso pudore linguem volvere. Hoc malum ' ex eo fonte manat, quod non perpenditur quid sit ecclesias- ' tici concionatoris tum dignitas, tum difficultas, tum utilitas.

they must all unite in one character, *who*, O God! *is sufficient for these things!*

Our office is an office of labour. In it, the wicked and slothful servant are but one and the same character. In it, an idle hour must therefore be always set down as a guilty one; and every moment must be occupied, or God, conscience, and perishing souls may upbraid us; as the moments which we waste in trifles, and the breath which we spend in talk, might, if applied properly, be the means of saving souls. Our office is an office of labour. It obliges us to carry our children in our bosom, *as a nurse her child;* to suffer the murmurings and ingratitudes without abandoning them; to aim at uniting in duty and observance of the law, all the different humours and inclinations of which they are made up; and to double our diligence, in proportion as they study to render our diligence useless. Our office is a station of eminence, where it is difficult to stand, and unspeakably dangerous to fall. It is, besides, an uncommodious elevation, which exposes to the observation of the public, and renders many things, in themselves *lawful*, to us *not expedient;* on account of the weakness of our brethren. And as we must often reprehend vice, we are often exposed to the hatred of those whom we ardently wish to save.

Our office is a dangerous charge, which renders us responsible to God for a vast number of souls, whose salvation or ruin must be in a great measure owing to us; so that we must be, in some degree, answerable for the sins of others as well as for our own. Our office is an awful dispensation, which commits to us the mysteries of God, and the fruits of the death of Christ; so that the least unfaithfulness becomes an abuse of his blood, and renders the inestimable benefits of his cross of non effect. It is a post of vigilance, which obligeth us to bear the spiritual armour of our sacred warfare always in our hands,

to combat against flesh and blood, and spiritual wickednesses in high places, and against the corruptions of the age in which we live. Otherwise, the crimes which we tolerate become our own, and public vices, whatever may be our personal innocence, become our particular faults. "The labours of a minister (says "Luther,) exhaust the very marrow from the bones, "and hasten forward old age and death."* These labours are fitly compared to the toil of men in harvest, to the labours of a woman in travail, and to the agonies or last efforts of soldiers in the extremity of battle. We must watch, when others sleep; we must study to paleness; we must preach to faintness. Instant in season and out of season, we must instruct the ignorant, reprove the wicked, exhort the negligent, alarm the presumptuous, strengthen the weak, visit the sick, comfort the afflicted, reclaim the wandering, and confirm the faithful. Is there on earth an office of greater labour; a situation less easy, or more dangerous than ours? Is there in the world a greater mistake, than to seek for rest here, where least of all it is to be found?

But, although you may not be moved by the hopes of gain or ease, yet still you may be incited by the prospect of honour. The reverence or respect annexed to the sacred office, when properly discharged, may perhaps allure you. If this be the motive of any of you, my brethren, it is, I fear, worse than any of those already mentioned. No Scylla or Charybdis ever feigned by the poets, could be more fatal to you than this rock, on which so many before you have made shipwreck.† Nay, Satan himself could

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* "Labores Ecclesiastici exhauriunt ab imis medullis, se-"nium mortemque accelerant."

† Teterrimus ille vanæ gloriæ spiritus longe infestior illo Sirenum portento quod poetæ confingunt. *Vid.* Chrysost. *de Sacerd.*

not have contrived a more effectual way to ruin you than this; for it is to set up yourself instead of Christ, it is to preach yourself instead of him. And what can be more provoking to the dread majesty of heaven and earth, than to see a worm claim a preference to him, and his servant challenge more regard to himself, than to his Maker and Master? The language of your selfish soul is not, "What shall I say, "or how shall I say it, so as to please and glorify "God, and do most good to the souls of men?"* but, "What shall I say, and how shall I deliver it, "so as to be thought an excellent preacher, and to "be admired and applauded by all who hear me?"

Admiration and applause you may perhaps obtain, for these are crumbs which the master of the family sometimes throws to the most worthless animals in his house, for whom he hath nothing greater in reserve. But then, when you have these, *verily, I say unto you, you have your reward.* And a poor reward it is, of which the Spanish poet, *Lope de Vega*, has given us the real estimate. To this man, Fame had assigned one of the highest seats in her temple. No person of eminence visited Spain without seeking his personal acquaintance. Men yielded him precedence when they met him in the streets, and women saluted him with benedictions when he passed beneath their windows. During a long life, all ranks seem to have united in honouring, and almost idolizing him. But, of all these honours, hear his own sentiment, as he was about to leave them.—"True honour," said he, "consists in doing and be-"ing good; and all the applauses which I ever re-"ceived, I would willingly exchange for the addi-"tion of a single deed of virtue to the actions of my "life."

* See Bostwick's Serm. on the Influence of a selfish Spirit upon Preaching.

How poor, then, is the applause which may fall to the vain and selfish, compared to the solid and lasting reward of the useful and faithful minister of Jesus! And, if the first be yours, my brethren, in the latter you can never have any share. For you will never be honoured as the instruments of saving souls. Or if, by an uncommon miracle, and the extraordinary grace of God, you should, yet be assured, that, after having thus preached the gospel to others, you yourselves must be cast away. Many of those servants whom the King of heaven hath sent out to invite his guests, although they may have had some success in their message, will not have the honour of sitting down with him at his table; yet he will *gird himself*, and, as it were, condescend to *serve* such of them as were most zealous and faithful, whose sole aim was to promote his glory, and bring souls to heaven.

In subordination, however, to this honour, which comes from God, I would not have you to be altogether indifferent to that which comes from men, especially from the wise and good. To the man who combines great virtue with great knowledge, and who employs both in promoting the temporal and eternal interests of mankind, the veneration of mankind is due; and, to make altogether light of it, is rather a sign of pride than of humility. But, if this honour is not altogether to be despised, it is still less to be courted, and, least of all, to be aimed at. *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.* And, if we preach him as we ought, our discourses will rather be felt by the heart, than praised by the tongue. That they should be followed by both these effects, was thought so unlikely by one of the fathers, that he wept when his hearers praised his sermon; for then he thought he had missed his purpose.

Besides examining thus into the *purity of your intentions*, you must observe, that your morals be also pure. Read, read often and carefully, the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus. These, as St. Augustin says, ought to lie for ever before the eyes of all persons set apart for the holy ministry. In these you see what an unblemished character is required of such a minister in holy things. And, without such a character, you must not presume to enter the holy of holies, lest the invisible hand of that God, who guards his own sanctuary, thrust you back as a bold intruder, and a profaner of his holy place and name. The man who appeared at the gospel supper in an ordinary robe, without the wedding garment, is rejected, although called; and will you, in a robe only ordinary, appear where you are to preside, to distribute, and to consecrate? If God required, that even his sacrifices should be without blemish, how can he bear that the priest himself should be impure? Can you, uncalled of God, thrust yourself forward, without the necessary qualification which we speak of, to that altar which even angels may approach with fear? Can you, being dead yourself, become the minister of life to others? Can you inspire them with a love to that piety to which your own soul is a stranger? No; *the man that shall ascend to the hill of God, or dwell within his holy place, must have a pure heart, and clean hands.* Like the brightness of Goshen amidst the obscurity of Egypt, his example and conversation must be *a burning and shining light* amidst the ignorance and darkness of the world. He must have a more than ordinary piety, and, with all that, a lively and deep sense of his own unworthiness impressed upon his soul. He must have that soft and gentle, that meek and humble, that charitable and compassionate temper, which Jesus requires more peculiarly of his ministers, and of which he himself was so bright

a pattern. He must be willing, that all he is, and all he has, should be spent, and, as it were, absorbed in the service of God. For, the glory of God, in the salvation of souls, is the end in which all his prayers, desires, studies, labours, living and dying, ought to centre. And, if he may only promote this, he obtains his highest wish, his joy is fulfilled. For, his heart's desire is to sacrifice himself, his means, his health, his life, to Christ; begging of him to dispose absolutely of them all, for the advancement of his glory, in the salvation of his people. And if such, my young brethren, are not your morals, if such are not your sentiments and dispositions, you ought to have *neither lot nor part in this matter.*

You must further examine, if you have talents suited to the sacred office to which you aspire. Moses himself, however well qualified by all his learning and wisdom, was afraid to enter on the embassy to which God called him, because he was *slow of speech.* Men rush not on ordinary employments in life, without talents suited to these employments. And will you, without the proper qualifications, venture upon the most august and important office under heaven? "Were I desired," says Chrysostom*, "to pilot a ship, with the most valuable cargo, "through the tempestuous Ægean sea, I would "resile with terror from the dangerous office to "which I was not equal." But how much more dangerous and important is the task of guiding souls to happiness? And how rash and mad must he be, who will undertake it without the proper qualifications? How many souls must he involve, together with his own, in one general ruin!

Besides talents, you must have an insatiable passion for study and improvement, without which the

* De Sacerd.

brightest talents will soon contract a rust, and become, in a great measure, useless to the world, and to their owner. He, therefore, who neglects to cultivate his talent, acts the same part with him in the gospel, who hid it in a napkin, and may one day expect to share in his fate. But of this subject I have spoken already, and need not here enlarge. Let me rather call upon you, my young brethren, to examine, in the presence of the great Searcher of hearts, whether your views be upright, your morals pure, your talents good, and your application to study unwearied and unremitting. Examine, whether you have that knowledge, zeal, piety, meekness, love, and other qualifications mentioned, as belonging to the sacred character. If you have, we rejoice to give you *the right hand of fellowship*. And, when God thinks fit to call us away, we shall, with the greatest pleasure, resign our life, and resign our charge, when we have the view of being more worthily succeeded.

But, if you have not these qualifications, we tremble for the church, we tremble for the souls of whom you take the charge, but, most of all, we tremble for yourselves, when we see you come forward, with unhallowed hands, to touch the ark. Any pretence of *a call* to the sacred office, without the qualifications, is false. Without these you must not, therefore, rush upon an office with which God hath not honoured even angels. And, to thrust yourselves forward in the place of Christ, as his ambassadors, and to handle his ordinances, uncommissioned, uncalled, unqualified; heavens! what treasures of wrath must you heap on yourselves if you do it. You may perhaps think, that a call or commission from men may bear you out. Ah! no; their *licence* is but a permission to rush on to your own perdition; their *imposition of hands* is but the giving you over, as a devoted victim, to the wrath

of heaven. It is but loading your head, like that of the scape-goat of old (if I may use so sacred a type for a comparison), not with your own sins, but with the sins of your people. Wherefore, my young brethren, I beseech you, let no vain imagination of profit, honour, or ease, impel you blindly on to this important office, where the things which you seek can never be found by you, or found only with damnation involved in their bosom, as thunderbolts in clouds, whose skirts at a distance may seem to be fair. Yes, my brethren, if higher views do not attract you, soon will you find, that you are but scrambling up the face of a precipice, where the danger of tumbling down increases every step as you go forward. And should you reach the height to which you aspire, you will by no means find there the ease and comfort which you expected. You will stand trembling on the dangerous eminence, and wish you had still remained in the safe, but humble valley, from which you departed. Nor shall you stand long, when the last awful messenger, commissioned by God, shall toss you headlong down, and the divine wrath pursue you to the lowest hell. For it may be justly inferred, that no man can have a larger share in the miseries of another life, than a wicked minister.

But you will, perhaps, tell me, that you will reform, and acquire, in the exercise of the sacred office, those dispositions which you did not bring to it. I answer, Never, without a miracle, upon which you, of all men, have the least title to presume. For he who enters upon the ministry without piety, is much more likely to arrive soon at profanity. "He contracts a callousness by his insensible way of "handling divine matters, by which he becomes har- "dened against them, and by which he is so far put "out of the reach of conviction, in all the ordina- "ry methods of grace, that it is scarce possible he

" can ever be awakened, and, by consequence, that " he can be saved. And if he perishes, he must fall " into the lowest degree of misery, even to the por- " tion of hypocrites; for his whole life is a course of " hypocrisy, in the strictest sense of the word, which " is acting a part, and the counterfeiting another per- " son. His sins have in them all possible aggrava- " tion; they are against knowledge, and against vows, " and contrary to his character; they carry in them " a deliberate contempt of all the truths and obliga- " tions of religion, and, if he perishes, he doth not " perish alone; but he carries a shoal down with " him, either of those who have perished in igno- " rance through his neglect, or of those who have " been hardened in sin through his ill example."*

I repeat it, my brethren, he who enters on this office with wrong views and dispositions, commits an error in the foundation, which, instead of mending, becomes the more dangerous as the building advances. Such a person is the object of God's wrath; and the Holy Spirit, the only sanctifier, will not vouchsafe to dwell with him. The very ordinances, of which he is the dispenser, will serve only to harden him. Every time he administers them, he commits a new crime. He was born in sin, he lives in guilt, he dies in impenitence. He sinks under the guilt of usurpation and profanation together. His disease is *incurable as the wound of Samaria.*

You see, then, my young brethren, how you ought to conceive of this august office, on which you are about to enter. You see the views, the morals, and the talents which you ought to have, if you would handle the mysteries of God, and stand at his holy altar. Examine, therefore, if you are possessed of these, and use every mean to ripen, strengthen, and

* Massilon.

perfect them. Keep always the end of the sacred office in view; and, in your conduct, conversation, and company, show that you are separated from the world, devoted to God, and probationers for the ministry. Be guarded in the choice of your company, be circumspect in your conduct, and let your conversation be grave, cheerful, and modest. Avoid alike flattery and slander, words that are idle, as well as those that are hurtful; and consider yourselves, each as an apostle, whose speech should always tend to edify. Be not conformed to the world, nor to it's vain customs, nor follow the maxims and manners of worldly men. For this purpose, keep always in your eye the example of your Master, and the precepts of the gospel, and consider what holiness of life, and purity of heart, they require in the sacred character with which you are about to be invested. In this straight line hold on immovably, without turning to the right or to the left, though men should say you are stiff and formal. Never affect to please in any thing foreign to your character; for, if you have social and convivial talents, you may therefore fall into a snare. Neither are you to put on the affectation of extraordinary sanctity; for cant and grimace are both suspicious and disgusting. You may be holy, without coveting too much to be thought so. It is best, with the simplicity of children, to appear always the very thing you are, without making any show of being better, which would make you suspected of being worse. If you are sometimes in company, be still oftener in retirement, and practise self-denial in all it's parts, even to severity. Remember, that even what is lawful may be far from expedient. How oft has this been verified by the imprudence of forming too early the innocent connections with the other sex; an error the more dangerous, that it is beyond the reach of cure from repentance. In this respect, then, keep your hearts with all dili-

gence; or, in other words, keep your distance. "The "heart of a young man beside a young woman," says an Eastern poet, "is like butter before the fire; "it will melt if you do not keep at a distance." Be, therefore, wise as serpents, while you are innocent as doves. Above all things, be much in prayer, much in meditation,* much in study. In regard to the plan of study which you ought to follow, or the books you ought to read in every science, particularly your own, it is difficult to give you any general rules, the tastes and capacities, and circumstances, and situations of men being so various; and new books, like new generations of men, daily pushing the old off the stage, and occupying their place. It is best to leave you to some pious, prudent, and learned friend; only recommending to you to avoid all idle and profane books, and, above all things, to read and search the scriptures. He is always the best divine who is best acquainted with the scriptures.† Be, therefore, always conversant with them, and set your hearts betimes on acquiring and excelling in all those dispositions and qualifications which we have shown to be essential to the sacred character. May these be in you and abound! May the Lord of the harvest pave the way for your entering into his vineyard; and, when you shall have come in, may he bless your labours with abundant success! In the mean time, may we, who are already engaged in the sacred office, always maintain the like thoughts of it's nature and importance. We are the servants of God, the ambassadors of Christ, and the ministers of his love to mankind. Let us imitate his example in meekness, tenderness, heavenly-mindedness, piety and zeal. His zeal is great for us; let ours be so for him.

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* Tria faciunt theologum, precatio, meditatio, tentatio. LUTHER.

† Bonus textuarius, bonus theologus.—LUTHER.

Let us leave to the dead the burying of their dead. Let us leave to the world it's cares and contentions about things of little moment. We are called to a higher warfare; to advance the kingdom of Christ, to gain souls, to save ourselves. With indefatigable zeal and patience, let us try every way to execute our commission. Let us have bowels of pity for sinners, who are nodding on the edge of a tremendous precipice, on the brink of a flaming tophet. Our glorious opportunities are hastening to a close. A few more days, and we must be no longer stewards. Life, like a rapid stream, is passing by. Death, on his *pale horse*, approaches; and behind him follow heaven and hell, those glorious and dreadful realities, to one or other of which every soul that leaves this world is eternally assigned. Let us then, for the love of God, in the name and bowels of Jesus, and in compassion to immortal souls of which we have the charge, be zealous and diligent in our labours, that we may be able to give our account with joy, and not with grief. Let our diligence increase in proportion as we approach the goal, and often reflect on the hastening moment that shall end our warfare. Let us sow the seed, let us plant, let us water.—And, though we may not always see a ready and visible success, yet he who giveth the increase, knoweth in what time it is fittest to do it; perhaps when our eye can no longer behold it. *The seed grew*, saith our Saviour, *while the husbandmen slept*. We would wish to see the immediate fruit of our labour; but God doth not always permit this, lest we should ascribe to ourselves the effects of his grace, and the work of his spirit. His will be done. Only let us be diligent, and leave our portion of the vineyard more improved to other labourers, who will very soon succeed us. Then, although *one sow and another reap*, we shall rejoice together in the day of harvest. Amen.

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